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# The Beltane Papers

A Journal of Women's Mysteries

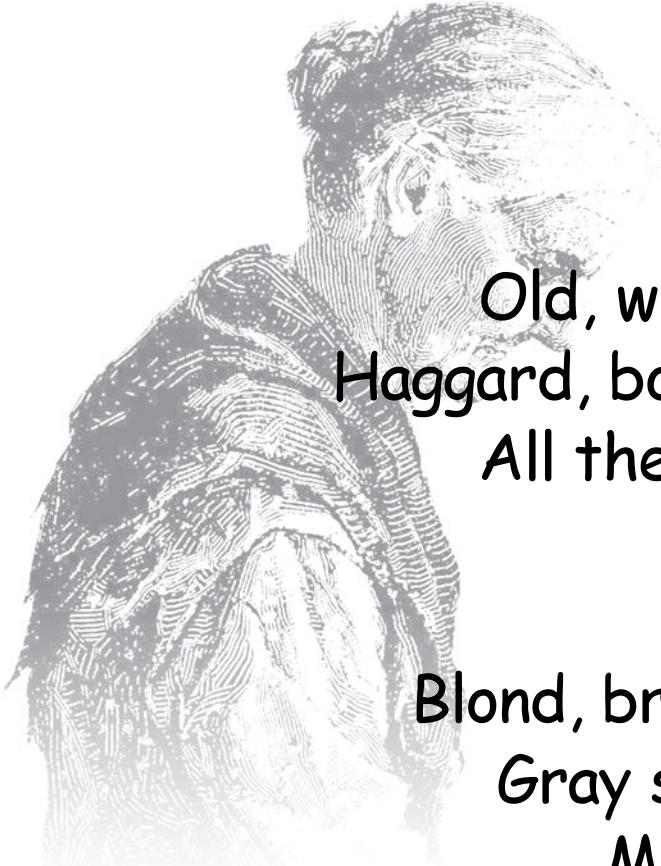
Issue 40  
Spring  
10,007th  
year of the  
Goddess

\$10.00 CAN  
\$7.50 USA



DC

"Sedna" by Lisa Hunt



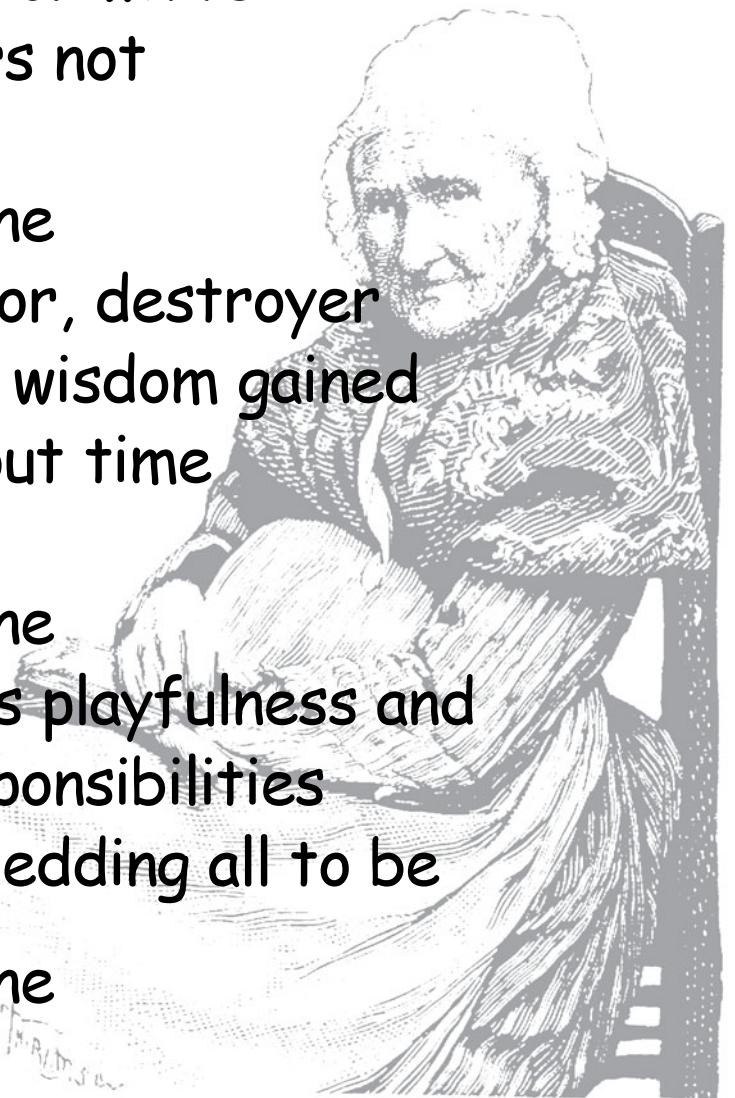
Crone

Crone

Old, wrinkled, cranky  
Haggard, bowed with her years  
All these - perhaps....

Crone

Blond, brunette, red head  
Gray silver or white  
Matters not



Crone

Survivor, creator, destroyer  
Lessons learned, wisdom gained  
Throughout time

Crone

Filled with maiden's playfulness and  
Mother's responsibilities  
Embracing and shedding all to be

Crone

**The Beltane Papers** exists to provide women with a safe place within which to explore and express the sacred in their lives, to educate, empower, encourage and entertain, to inspire, support and reinforce their perception of reality. Published 3 times annually **The Beltane Papers** is a registered corporation in the state of Washington.

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*Incorporated February 12th, 9098th year of the Goddess (1998)*

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# The Beltane Papers

## A Journal of Women's Mysteries

### Issue #40

*The Crone's Thaw*

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This publication is printed on recycled paper with soy ink

*This publication is printed on recycled paper with soy ink by Consolidated Press,  
600 S. Spokane St., Seattle, WA 98134  
(206) 441-1844*

*Casey Caesar, customer representative*

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**Advertising:** Classified ads are 75 cents per word, first several words in bold caps. Non-profit is \$7.50 for up to 50 words. For display ad rates, Diane Saarinen at [Diane@thebeltanepapers.net](mailto:Diane@thebeltanepapers.net) or write c/o The Beltane Papers.

**Subscriptions**  
US rates: Sample \$5  
1 year/3 issues \$16  
2 years/6 issues \$32

**In Canada:** Sample \$7US.  
1 year/3 issues \$22US  
2 years/6 issues \$44 US

**Elsewhere:** Sample \$8.50US  
1 year/3 issues \$25US  
2 years/6 issues \$50US

All items shipped to Washington state addresses must be taxed. See Magazine subscription form on page 64

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**Disclaimer:** The opinions and ideas of the contributors are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of all the staff members.

## About this issue. . .

Hello readers and welcome back! Issue 40 has made it to the newsstands and it is beautiful. Our guiding goddess is Sedna. Some might ask how the guiding goddess is chosen and I will tell you that she chooses us! She chooses us through the submissions we get and through the group's own personal experiences. I believe Sedna came to us because of TBP's situation. We have lost Marione and several people have left the group—a form of "dis-memberment." And yet, with those who were left and with those who have newly joined, TBP is going through a transformation. With Carisa's Swenson's guidance and art direction, TBP has a sleeker, more professional look than ever. Ani Ashford-Trotter, an artist, writer, Druid and witch in the Seattle area, has joined us. And we have our first (in a very long time) official intern, Alanna Muniz. She is majoring in Women's Studies at the University of Washington and will even receive credit for helping us out (and studying us, too!).

I think the Sedna collective piece is wonderful. I feel that it is reflective of our newfound collaboration. I have not heard of ourselves referred to as "the collective" in so very long. It both scares me and thrills me. It only scares me because some aspects of TBP's past history, but it thrills me in that we can see a glimmer of the ideal that was/is behind the concept of "the collective." It feels like something old is something new again, familiar but freshly different. Beautiful voices sharing their experiences; kind of like a harmony. Truly, Marione IS proud, and I am proud to be a part of this. It is a spiritual experience, an experience of community; this is what TBP was intended to be.

We are also lucky enough in this issue to be allowed to reprint an interview with Alice Walker by Amy Goodman from Democracy Now! Alice is a powerful woman whose writings have focused on a myriad of subjects including sexual and racial realities within black communities as well as the unavoidable connections between family and society. Her most famous work is *The Color Purple*, brought to the attention of mainstream America through the film adaptation by Steven Spielberg.

TBP is indeed a form of social experiment. The entire production staff is made up of women; the artists and writers are all women. Those in the production circle live all over the United States; our contributors are international. We connect through the internet, and all our submissions, editing and production is done through this medium. And we are an all-volunteer production. Everything that is done is done out of love and respect for women. Our mission statement reads: "TBP exists to provide women with a safe place within which to explore and express the sacred in their lives, to educate, empower, encourage and entertain, to inspire, support and reinforce their perception of reality." And

## About the cover

Lisa Hunt is a watercolorist who has spent years exploring how art can serve as a vehicle for communicating ideas, feelings and imagery contained within the psyche. It is her goal to elicit a sense of wonder—to allow the viewer to reach into something deeper within.

The painting of Sedna, an underwater deity from the Inuit tradition, exemplifies this idea: As Sedna submerges, she is connecting more fully with her inner being, allowing one state of consciousness to merge with another. Sedna was originally published as the Death Card for Animals Divine Tarot (Llewellyn 2005) to represent rebirth and opportunities for new beginnings.

When not painting, Lisa enjoys reading, researching, sketching, writing, gardening, tae kwon do and all manner of cerebral and earthy pursuits. She lives with her husband, Kort Kramer, and their two young children in South Florida.

To contact Lisa, visit her website at [www.lisahuntart.com](http://www.lisahuntart.com).

Artwork copyright Lisa Hunt from the *Animals Divine Tarot* (Llewellyn Publications 2005)

based on this model we put out a magazine three times a year!

But, like any other publication, we need money to print. We are trying to move away from donation-based monetary sources to paid advertisements to cover the cost of printing. Even as few as five paid display ads would make a difference; ten would make a world of difference! Our orders from distributors are down and our subscriber list is down. We need a volunteer who is familiar with advertising, marketing, and PR. This is something we can't teach so we are looking for an experienced woman or several experienced women!

With all this said, TBP is truly a celebration of collaboration and I am proud to be a part of a collective of wonderful women!

*~Lisé Quinn*

## ERRATA

The date of death for Marione was wrong; she died in the early morning hours of September 4th, 2006, not September 3rd. I also said that she was survived by her brother David but he passed before her 23 years ago. And the continuation for Dr. Leslie Miller's response to Menstrual Suppression on page 13 is wrong, it says page 21 but it should be page 22. And finally this paragraph was somehow left out of Flash Silvermoon's bio on page 20; "she does work as an animal communicator and more information can be found at her site at [www.flashsilvermoon.com](http://www.flashsilvermoon.com)"

## COLLECTIVE COMMENTS

From Carolyn,

Every time I encounter a woman who needs to know her own divinity, whether she is part of or leaving a patriarchal religion that tells her that she is less than men, or a victim of violence, or someone who has just always been told she can't follow her dreams, I know how important The Beltane Papers is and I am so glad that it is not only still in existence, but thriving. This news does indeed bode very well and the more issues we get out the more people will be ready to advertise, contribute and subscribe.

We are coming together as a group but also the articles that are coming in seem to be interweaving and, for lack of a

better word, flowing together. There is something about that water theme that gets women moving together.

I see our little crew as bringing very important elements to TBP and women's spirituality and one thing is our combined life experience. For a small group of people we have had a ton of life experience. I think of all the women out there who may not have ever thought of the Divine as female (yet who desperately need the self-acceptance and horizon-widening of that experience), but who could connect with something in TBP because of some common experience with one of us. And, once that connection to a common experience is made, perhaps the ideas and values of women's spirituality will come into that person's life through TBP. That's one reason why I love the Sedna collaboration, for example. I think that just about any woman who, for some reason, picks up this issue and reads those pieces will find something in there that speaks to her own life, whether she is involved with women's spirituality or not. I think that's unique and I hope it continues to grow. And I do think that as we get more distributors and continue to network, more women who have never seen TBP will see it.

From Diane,

These happy faces belong to some of the women who bring you art and writing in *The Beltane Papers*—and who laughingly refer to themselves as the Brooklyn division. Carisa Swenson (left) brings us her beautiful illustrations in



*Carisa, Diane and Kris - Photo by Ann Gaba.*

each issue of TBP; Diane Saarinen (center) wears many, many hats; and Kris Waldherr (right) is our regular columnist who delivers thoughtful personal essays to mull over, which are illustrated by her as well.

On February 3, one day after Imbolc and the full moon, the ladies got together in Diane's Brooklyn apartment to join

with the Lyceum Urania Celestia, a New York City chapter of the Fellowship of Isis. A lively time was enjoyed by all, as the gathering consisted of eight magical women, two toddlers, and an infant. The ritual enacted was the “Mystical Awakening of Sagittarius and Brynhild,” which resonated in many ways with the trio—Carisa and Diane responded to the Nordic undertones with their Scandinavian ancestry; and Kris has a special affinity with Brunnhilde, who is seen in the Strength and the Princess of Wands cards in her *Lover's Path Tarot*.

One can connect with an already-existing group in the Fellowship of Isis, or practice as a solitary. For more information, please visit [www.fellowshipofisis.com](http://www.fellowshipofisis.com).

## LETTERS TO TBP

I just received my copy and am enjoying it very much! It is so interesting reading about Marione, whom I did not know personally but felt like I did after reading all the tributes to her.

Reading the ritual again made me so disappointed I could not take part in it. It is incredible that of all times for there to be trouble on the line so that I was unable to get on the internet, it would have to be that evening!!! It has not happened since, nor did it before that!

I am wondering if there are any more plans for cyber rituals? It would be great to have one for a sabbat ceremony. Any thoughts or interest?

I have not yet finished reading *The Beltane Papers*, but my congratulations on all of your interesting contributions! Happy Yule and New Year to you all!

~Mary Edda Gamson

*Dear Mary Edda,*

*Thank you for your kind words about Marione. We missed you at the ritual as well! As of now, there are no plans for future cyber rituals but perhaps our readers can respond and let us know if that is something they might like in the future.*

*Blessings of the Turning Wheel, Diane*



Dear all,

I got my TBP and it's just beautiful!! Lisé and the rest of the volunteer production list did an awesome job!!! Thank you, thank you!!

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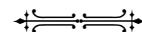
**The Beltane Papers:** A Journal Of Women's Mysteries

I love so many of the articles; I don't have a fav. And the artwork is wonderful!!

It is truly a fitting tribute and memorial to Marione. Anyone else got their's?

I admit, I had a good cry too!!

~peace blessings, Juliette Athena



I have to say Lisé, you and the volunteers that brought this issuetogether should give yourselves a pat on the back. You did an excellent job honoring the memory of a beautiful soul.

I am sorry I never wrote a tribute for her. Each time I sat down to write, I would find myself at a loss for words and and feeling a loss so deep it would hurt my heart.

I miss her greatly, and know she would not like me crying for the loss of her physical body, but I find it difficult to accept that she is gone and I will never see her in this world again.

She was more than a friend to me. She was a mother and a grandmother.

I kept thinking after each update I got from this list or her daughter that I'd have another day to get my words together and say "I Love You."

She slipped away before I got myself together. Now I scream the words out with my heart to her, wherever she is. Along with "I'm Sorry" and "Thank You!"

I miss her.

Thank you for honoring her memory and her life with this issue.

Blessed Be, Summer

*From Lisé*

*Summer you were a great friend to Marione; you were there to help her when she needed it for many years. She had help in Graciela and her own family during those last months.*

*She knows how much you care for her and she hears you even now. It's not too late. When your heart can stand it, write down what Marione meant to you, but you have done a good job here already.*

*We share your pain; we feel Marione's absence with*

...Continued on page 22

# Remembrance of M

Some day I shall have a cat.

It will be the right cat.

At the right time.

It will be a tall cat.

Not a young one. I have no patience for playful kittens that end up tearing things up. Nor will this cat.

It will be a white cat with a black mask.

Sometimes that cat face will look unbelievably amused. Sometimes a little disappointed.

The right cat will be tall.

It will walk large. Tall, erect and, when it can't do that any longer it will still be graceful, no, grace filled.

It won't demand much.

It won't need much.

Be there when needed. Walk away when not.

It will like books. Not just any books. Books with character and proper words. Books that, should I read aloud it will enjoy. Not the sound of my voice, but the words themselves. Sometimes I will find this cat asleep. Curled around a book unfinished.

It will know if I screw up.

So long as I don't do it when I'm reading or writing, it will allow it.

It won't like being written about...except secretly it will.

If it thinks I'm really about to screw up... It will, when justified, howl. Long, hard, until it is heard.

But, most of the time it will be quiet. When it does speak it will have the most lush, low, pleasant slow sound.

There will be nothing so much as a well written TV series to keep it's interest up for hours. I shall be able to play reruns of Joan of Arcadia. It will tolerate Joseph Campbell but try and remind me there are many new books and many new shows on those subjects waiting to be read or seen. It will howl and carry on for Johnny Depp.

It will love music. Especially from small local bands and old songs.

It will enjoy wrapped presents. And the wrapping as much as the present.

It will enjoy visitors and, when it's done with the visitors it will bid farewell with a gentle nudge.

It will enjoy the sun but not as much as the soft rain.

It will like excellent foods and enjoy cloth that is well made and comfortable. Not only to play with but sleep on.

It will enjoy sewing baskets and sewing projects.

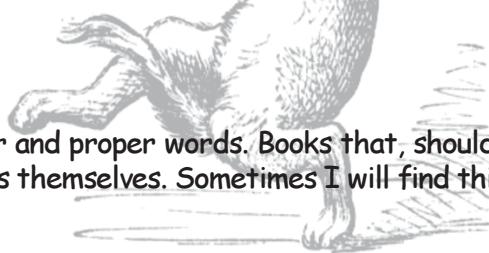
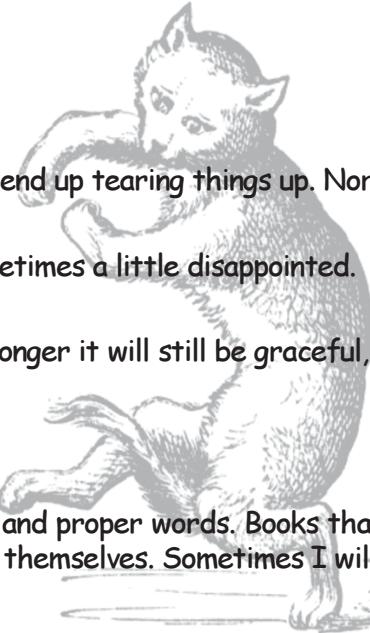
Sometimes it will drink out of a china cup.

Sometimes it will be content to forage for itself.

It will comfort me more than I comfort it.

Yes, someday I shall have a white cat with a black mask.

I shall name it...Marione



by Marilyn

# IT'S KILLING US!

by Lisé Quinn

On my first visit to see Marione in the hospital, she looked me straight in the eye and said, "We have to get the word out about smoking and lung cancer." She was diagnosed with lung cancer in May, 2006, after it had spread to her brain. The cancer in her brain was causing seizure-like involuntary movements on one side of her body. It was because of this that they found the cancer. She kept falling and, at first, they thought it was related to diabetes, which Marione also had. They did some brain scans and discovered the brain cancer, which led them to the lung cancer. Marione died on September 4, 2006.

Sadly, I had seen this before. My grandfather died of lung and lymphatic cancer back in the late 70's. When I started to think about it, I realized that almost everyone I know who has died, died from preventable diseases. My father died of a heart attack due to probable heart disease. One of my best friends died of a stroke. Most of the deaths of people I know were from one or more of the top killers—heart disease, lung cancer and strokes.

## Leading Causes of Death and Disability in American Women

Lung cancer is the second most prolific killer of women after cardiovascular disease. Lung cancer killed more than 73,000 women in the United States in 2005.<sup>1</sup> Cigarette smoking causes 87 percent of lung cancer deaths.<sup>2</sup> Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death in both men and women.<sup>3</sup> Smoking is also responsible for most cancers of the larynx, oral cavity and pharynx, esophagus, and bladder.

We see commercials for osteoporosis and marathons to support breast cancer research, yet the biggest killers of women are cardiovascular diseases (heart diseases and strokes). They are responsible for more deaths in women than all forms of cancer combined.<sup>4</sup> About eight million women in the United States are living with heart disease and 440,000 women have heart attacks every year (9,000 of those women are under the age of 45).<sup>5</sup> Being overweight is the biggest contributing factor in cardiovascular disease and the leading cause of type II diabetes (adult onset).

And then there are strokes. "A stroke is a sudden interruption in the blood supply of the brain. Most strokes

are caused by an abrupt blockage of arteries leading to the brain (ischemic stroke). Other strokes are caused by bleeding into brain tissue when a blood vessel bursts (hemorrhagic stroke). Because stroke occurs rapidly and requires immediate treatment, stroke is also called a brain attack."<sup>6</sup> Strokes are the third leading cause of death, and the leading cause of

serious, long-term disability in the United States.<sup>7</sup> Many of the conditions and factors that increase one's risk of stroke are within our control: smoking, obesity, excessive alcohol and drug abuse, and physical inactivity.

The medical conditions that increase one's risk for a stroke are cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and high blood pressure. If you have any of these already, you must follow your doctor's recommendations for treatment. Not taking the prescribed medications and not following through on dietary and lifestyle changes will increase your risk for a stroke.

I recently read in a *New York Times* article that a UN report stated that more people in the world now suffer from diseases and disorders related to obesity than from malnutrition. Diabetes and cardiovascular disease are the two fastest growing health issues in up-and-coming third world countries due to industrialization and the importing of the western diet.<sup>8</sup>

## Saving Our Own Lives

The very sad common denominator to strokes, lung cancer and cardiovascular disease is that these illnesses are preventable; yet many of us do not take actions to help ourselves. Marione knew all the dangers of smoking and of being overweight. She was a smart, educated woman; she saw a doctor regularly. Yet none of it seemed real or as if it could happen to her until she was diagnosed in those last few months.

When I talk to women about being overweight (I, myself, am 90 pounds overweight), I hear all the familiar excuses. I've used them myself. "I'm just big-boned." "It's hereditary." "Some people have endocrinological disorders



that make them gain weight (such as an underactive thyroid).” All of these things may be true, but that does not mean that people in these situations are at any less risk. Smokers have just as many excuses, “I have the right to smoke if I want to.” “I’ll quit tomorrow.” “If I quit, I’ll get fat.” I smoked for 17 years myself. My mother has Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) from 35 years of smoking. These habits and food and smoking addictions are hard to overcome but we are poisoning ourselves with what we take into our bodies and by not exercising.

I understand from personal experience how hard it is to change, to give up smoking and to lose weight. I work at a hospital and you would be amazed at how many health professionals are overweight and smoke! Food that is unhealthy is often the most accessible, convenient and cheap. In addition, the portion sizes we are eating are large and have a lot more calories than we realize. The average recommended calorie intake for the average person is 2000 calories each day. One can easily consume over 1500 calories for lunch at McDonalds. Add a stuffed crust pizza for dinner at over 400 calories for each piece (I can wolf down three without even thinking), and we have hit 2700 calories. Do you eat dessert? One cup of vanilla fudge ice cream can be another 500 calories. The restaurant Ruby Tuesday’s “Colossal Burger” weighs in at around 1,940 calories and includes 141 grams of fat!<sup>9</sup> Add this to a rather inactive lifestyle, with all the modern conveniences that industrialization has brought us, and I am gaining weight every day!

Smoking was for many years such an embedded part of my life. I had a cigarette when I woke up, when I went to bed, before each meal, after each meal, before I performed some task, after I finished the task. I’d even take breaks just to smoke. I imagine that tobacco in its natural state may not be so addictive, but the tobacco companies develop strains for addictiveness with over 600 additives, many of which are meant to increase addictiveness.<sup>10</sup> The longer and the more cigarettes you smoke, the greater your risk of lung cancer. However, if you stop smoking, the risk of lung



cancer decreases each year as normal cells replace abnormal cells.

We should ask ourselves: “What will it take for us to

save our own lives?”

Can we a l l o w Marione’s death to serve some purpose by provoking those of us who smoke

to stop and to encourage us to maintain healthy weights and healthy hearts? Can we use her death as an impetus to change our own lives? I can think of no better way to honor Marione than to learn from her mistakes.

So how do we do it? I don’t have all the answers but I have a lot of ideas. The most important two are “Don’t give up!” and “Take it one day at a time.” For many of us it is more than a matter of sheer will power. Some of us need help, from support groups to medical treatment. Reach out and get support. If one method doesn’t work, try another. See your doctor. He or she can help with both weight loss and smoking cessation. Try hypnotism! Sometimes we need a group of people to help us through a difficult task, so find other people to keep you going. When you were a baby and just learning to walk, you fell down quite a bit. But you got back up and you kept trying until you made it. Use this same approach to quitting smoking, losing weight, and getting fit; every day is a new day and an opportunity to be successful.

I have tried many things myself. I was lucky with the smoking. I decided that as a birthday present for myself for my 30<sup>th</sup> birthday I would quit. I woke up that morning and never picked up another cigarette. However, before that, I quit smoking and started again several times. I quit while I was pregnant with my first child and started again after my last. Even now, there are moments when I think to myself “Gee, a cigarette would sure be good right about now.”

I have hadn’t had as much success losing weight. I gained weight with each child I had and I never lost it. Now that I am in my mid-forties, it seems even harder. My energy level is less because it’s harder to move all this extra weight around. I get tired easier. I do less but I

## **Kick the Habit Spell**

You will need:

**Cinnamon ~ Ginger ~ Chili powder**

**Charcoal disk ~ A red candle ~ A black candle**

**Sage ~ An empty pack of cigarettes**

**Matches ~ A bowl**

Prepare your sacred space, be it a circle cast, or just some soothing meditation to free your mind of the thoughts of the day. This work should be performed during the full or waning moon as it represents your addiction shrinking and becoming powerless over you.

Light the red candle. Say, “Red is the color of strength, red is the color of power. I have the strength to kick this habit, day by day, hour by hour.”

Light the black candle. Say, “Black is the color that sends things away, and gives me the strength to kick this today.”

Working between the two candles, mix the cinnamon, ginger and chili powder together, grinding them until they are powdery. Place the charcoal disc in your bowl, and sprinkle the cinnamon mixture on top of it. Light the charcoal.

You should have a nice burning pile of ground herbs now. Slowly tear the cigarette package (without the cellophane) into small pieces. As you tear the paper, close your eyes and visualize the nicotine and tar leaving your body. Picture your lungs changing from black and icky to pink and healthy.

Place the torn pieces in the bowl with the burning charcoal. Light a match, and place it in there so that the torn cigarette pack begins to burn as well. It may not stay lit, but try to get it to burn a little bit. Say, “I burn what has no control over me. The addiction is gone, and I will be free.”

Light the sage, and smudge the area around your work space. You are cleansing yourself of the effects of the bad habit, and freeing your body and soul from the addiction. Particularly smudge the area over the bowl with the burning cigarette pack in it. Say, “Within me is the strength, no doubt, and with sage I cleanse the air without.”

Place your smudging sage in the bowl as well, and take a moment to reflect. This working is not about the habit itself, but about your rejection of the addiction. Realize that you will physically—and psychologically—no longer need the habit.

Allow everything in the bowl to burn out on its own. If possible, allow the candles to burn out on their own as well.

eat as much as ever. I’ve switched to non-fat everything but I eat way too much of it!

But I’m not giving up!

And don’t you give up either! Every day we wake up alive is a chance to improve our health, and by doing so we will have more energy, money saved by not buying cigarettes and food, and time to live.

## **Smoking Cessation**

Some people start by cutting back until they are down to two or three a day and then stop. Others use a patch or gum. However, one of the keys to success is to change what you associate with smoking, especially the feelings or emotions. These drive us more than we recognize. Many who smoke associate feelings of comfort, pleasure, or calming when they smoke. Smoking triggers chemical changes in our bodies that influence how we feel. This is why we smoke—we are trying to change the way we feel. If we actually associate smoking with death, the nausea of radiation treatment, the hair loss etc., it would be much easier to quit. But that stuff is far off in our minds and the immediate pleasure of the change in feeling from that first drag is foremost. This is where meditation, self-hypnosis and spells can help. But these should go hand in hand with physical action and support.

I have learned a lot about the power of visualization over the years and have experienced the power of it myself. The relationship between what we think, believe, desire and fear and our experience in life is clear to me. I’ve also had some experience with marketing techniques and advertising. The goal of most commercial advertising campaigns is to get you to link a positive emotion with their product. “Just think how cool you’ll be with your new 42 inch super TV. Your friends will visit, your neighbors will love you and all will be right with the world, if you just buy our product!” And think about the new Coke ads where the guy goes around in a video game modeled after the “Grand Theft Auto” style games.<sup>11</sup> At first you might think he’s a thug, but instead he does all these good deeds because he drinks Coke. “Drinking Coca-Cola will make you a good man!” Very recently I saw an animated anti-smoking public service announcement on TV. Two young teens meet together to kiss. But just before they do one picks up something nauseating, a dead animal that is decomposing or rotting garbage, and puts it in her or his mouth. The other is totally grossed at the thought of kissing. The narrator equates this with smoking. What a great image to

associate with smoking! Something just so totally disgusting you could never bring yourself to put that in your mouth.

So with the above ideas in mind you can create daily visualizations for yourself based on these ideas in a bit of the “carrot and stick” approach. First, create a set of visualizations that associates all the best feelings and outcomes throughout the rest of your life with not smoking. These could be better health, more money, benefits to your family and friends, anything good you can possibly associate with not smoking. This would be the “carrot.”

Now the “stick”; use that kissing PSA’s approach. Connect the grossest thing you can think of with smoking. One technique I’ve picked up is a form of visualization with emotions. You hold the image of what you don’t want in your head while thinking about all the horrible outcomes from it. Imagine how you would really feel if the doctor were telling you right now at this moment that you are dying from smoking. Let yourself feel the feelings you would feel if that were true, how you would feel watching your friends and family go through losing you. Think of every bad thing that could happen associated with smoking and the horrible feelings that would accompany such things and hook it up to smoking. Don’t do this very long, just enough to upset yourself a little.

If you can incorporate these into your meditations and spells you will increase your chances of success. How you change that association is up to you, there are a multitude of tools at your disposal.

*Lisé Quinn has been with TBP since 1996 and is a corporation officer as well as an editor, a proofer and a production technician. She is an eclectic witch in her mid-forties. She works by day as a geeky systems engineer and seems to also work at night as a geeky desktop publisher. Her spiritual influences are many and include her grandmother (a witch as well as a minister in the Religious Science Church), her grandfather (an astrologer and a Youth Parole Officer), her mother (Vedanta Hindu – it was the 60's!), a dead guy named Seth, Shamanism, and Goddess-centered philosophies. She is a minister of the Universal Life Church. She lives in the Pacific Northwest by a big lake with her dog, a rottweiler named Kali, and various twenty-somethings who seem to come and go without warning. She loves to travel and to visit sacred sites and is looking forward to a two-week cruise up the rivers of China, from Shanghai to Beijing in the fall.*

## You Can Quit Smoking

Follow This 5-day Countdown to Your Quit Date

### 5 Days Before Your Quit Date

Think about your reasons for quitting.

Tell your friends and family you are planning to quit.

Stop buying cigarettes.

### 4 Days Before Your Quit Date

Pay attention to when and why you smoke.

Think of other things to hold in your hand instead of a cigarette.

Think of habits or routines to change.

### 3 Days Before Your Quit Date

What will you do with the extra money when you stop buying cigarettes?

Think of who to reach out to when you need help.

### 2 Days Before Your Quit Date

Buy the nicotine patch or nicotine gum.

Or see your doctor to get the nicotine inhaler, nasal spray, or the non-nicotine pill.

### 1 Day Before Your Quit Date

Put away lighters and ashtrays.

Throw away all cigarettes and matches.

Clean your clothes to get rid of the smell of cigarette smoke.

### Quit Day

Keep very busy.

Remind family and friends that this is your quit day.

Stay away from alcohol.

Give yourself a treat or do something special.

**Smoke Free**

### Congratulations!!!

If you "slip" and smoke, don't give up. Set a new date to get back on track.

Call a friend or "quit smoking" support group.

Eat healthy food and get exercise.

### For More Help

For help in quitting smoking, call the National Cancer Institute's Smoking Quitline.

Toll-free: 1-877-44U-QUIT.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Public Health Service

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# Sedna: Arctic Crane of the Ocean

illustrated by Carisa Swensen

Each issue of *The Beltane Papers* has a Guiding Goddess. With the lush green growth of spring peeking out as this particular issue is born, what draws our collective attention to Sedna, Sea Goddess of the Arctic?

Actually, it's not that unusual a choice. With the passing of Marione Thompson-Helland, the collective found itself in a bit of a deep freeze. Working on the magazine when it was a memorial to Marione, as the last issue was, was difficult but we carried out that task, at times simply dutifully, at others time genuinely inspired. But for the first issue that would be confirmation that yes, *The Beltane Papers* would continue, ever growing, ever evolving—well, we were stuck for just a little bit. An initially mild winter was experienced in many of the little geographic corners we work out of during production of the issue you see here, but nonetheless there was a moment before the wheels of *TBP* began turning. We needed a thaw. And just like a good thaw, there was a literal “breaking of the ice.” The collective members got to know each other, learning of each other’s unique tastes and idiosyncrasies. The beginning of the Sedna myth begins in the frigid Arctic landscape, but it ends with the description of an abundant underwater paradise, populated with sea creatures of all types. And it is sometimes in the underworld, the fertile field of the unconscious, where we can grow and thrive.

In an experiment the collective is conducting, we felt that since we resonated with the Sedna myth so strongly, we would see what happened if we took the story apart. We assigned different stages to different women, finding out if we could draw parallels in our own lives to the different sections. I received the

beginning of the myth to work with:

**Sedna is a strong-willed and rebellious young woman growing up in the Arctic. She has many potential suitors but turns them all away. When the mysterious bird-groom comes calling, he lures Sedna into marriage. Soon she finds out it is not all it is cracked up to be. Her father comes to rescue her, and they try to flee in a boat. But the bird-groom causes a terrific storm...**

I see this as a metaphor for my relationship to my creative self. I often determine, in a steadfast and headstrong way, what I will expend my energies on artistically and what I won’t. I try to be selective, as otherwise I can burn out—and badly. Sometimes opportunities come that I turn down. However, sometimes something comes along that might be “too good to be true.” Of course, I go and follow those opportunities, often with a sense of trust that probably is best illustrated by the tarot card, “The Fool.”

If I become overwhelmed with tasks, which I try very hard not to do, I might wait to be rescued (in the myth, the young woman’s father comes to find her). This is not a good situation to be in, as you do not know what escape-hatch you might choose to be the one to fish you out of a messy situation. The messy situation, however, might not be an easy one to extricate oneself from. Hence the storm. And your rescuer, having been chosen from the “default” mode, might not have your best interests in mind...

— Diane Saarinen

**In an attempt to save himself, Sedna's father begins cutting off Sedna's fingers, then her arms, hoping that once she falls into the ocean the storm will cease...**

When death destroyed the warm and safe sanctuary of what was once my home, and the future that always shone blissful and radiant before me dimmed to murky misery, the boat that carried me over unknown chaos was all I had left. Even when the thief of everything I knew began chopping off my fingers, I still clung to the edge of the boat as my last refuge.

The blow that cut off my first finger was a surprise. I felt only pain and shock at the unthinkable.

After the second finger was gone, blood stained the bottom of the boat. Once beauty had seemed a guarantee of life's goodness but now my face betrayed my sorrow and my body was impure, flawed, unworthy.

When the knife severed the third finger, I understood that everything I had believed in was wrong. I was not who I had thought nor did I live in a world I knew.

By the demise of my fourth finger, I no longer counted how many fingers I had left. All that measured my world—time, numbers, accomplishments and acquisitions—was meaningless.

When my thumb was flung over the side of the boat, my eyes followed it and I caught sight of myself in the water. My face was made old, but in its wrinkles lived all that I had loved and lost, and it was beautiful to me.

My tormentor began chopping the fingers off my other hand and I tried in vain to grab them and toss them back in the boat where they belonged. They should not pollute the sea where I must die and spend eternity.

As my sixth finger flew over my head, I relived the moment when I traded my courage to live imaginatively and spiritedly for the security of a worldview that is limited to what I can see.

When my seventh finger fell away from me, I flung from me the words of self-betrayal with which I accepted beliefs that told me that death is a severing, that love can have an end.

My eighth finger hit the water with a “plink.” I no longer blamed myself for allowing anyone to throw me from the boat where I no longer belonged or was welcome.

At the moment when my ninth finger sunk below the surface, I let go of the boat. Adventurous uncertainty now seemed magnificent while the boat was simply a prison made of dead wood.

Before I lost my thumb I used it to push away from the side and the knife sunk into the hull, leaving a gash through which the water surged in until the boat sank.

The ice cracked around me as I slipped through it and the sound was deeply delicious and satisfying. “Do not struggle. Sink to the bottom. Rest,” I heard my own voice say.

When I had sunk far past where I imagined the bottom must be I opened my eyes. Around me were women, sea animals, shards of light and color, sea weed, coral; beauty that



had always been here but that I had never seen from the land. My mother, my grandmother, friends living and dead, women from times and places far from me, all seemed to know me; all were singing. It was this music I had heard, calling me not to death, but to this new life.

Here was my dear friend who had died as if she were setting off on a thrilling journey. Her words of encouragement to be more than I believed I was lived on in the moment I let go of the boat. There was my grandmother who had raised my mother alone by sewing late into each night after she left her abusive husband.



Here was a woman who had escaped soldiers pursuing her and those she brought with her across the wrong side of a border. I basked in the smile of a woman who accepted healing to free herself of the depression that had tormented, but also defined, her and who now made others whole. I recognized so many women who had each found her own way to abandon that which had kept her from the true grandeur of life. Here they lived, even those who also had bodies and lives above the sea. They call and nourish all women, witnessing that we have only to let go of the boat to see that we are one another's true home and ship of salvation.

— Carolyn Lee Boyd

**Sedna was transformed into the queen of the ocean depths, where she lived in a house made of stone and whale ribs and oversaw life and death.**

To me, Sedna's story describes the shamanic process. As shamans begin their journey to enlightenment their world is sort of turned upside down. I was warned of this when I undertook shamanic training and indeed my whole life was turned upside down and shaken. Nothing is the same as it was before. It tore me apart both in the outer world as well as the psychological and emotional realms. Many initiation stories include a dismembering—representing the taking apart of the old structure to create the new one. Look to the story of "Inanna's Descent" of Sumer. To get to her sister's world for her brother-in-law's funeral, Inanna had to descend into the underworld and pass through seven gates. At each something was removed from her; her crown, her robes, and her symbols of rulership, her jewelry and then finally her flesh.

Often this taking apart is followed by a rebirth, a new and improved being, such as Sedna becomes. In many ways this myth contains elements of the Hero's Journey, The father is the impetus that carries the story along. Do not be too angry with her father as it is through his actions that she transcends and becomes Goddess and he becomes her care-taker or servant. In so many myths it seems a cataclysmic event must occur for the transformation to take place. I think it relates to the immensity of the change —to go from human to divine is indeed quite a change.

We must also look at the environment and culture of the people this myth comes from. The struggle to live

is much harder; many don't make it. The value of women's lives are less than men's in this region, as it has been globally and female infanticide is not unheard of. So transforming a daughter's death into a tale of the birth of a Goddess is a way to honor those who could not be supported. The burden becomes the life-giver, the supplier of food for the community. Nowadays this doesn't happen anymore and we tend to judge this kind of thing from a position of abundance and plenty without considering their harsh reality and scarcity of food. Survival of the most people becomes more important than survival of the individual.

— Lisé Quinn

Doctors always recommend walking after a hysterectomy. A week after mine I was walking in the creek on our farm. It was a hot June day and the water was cold and soothing. Wary of falling, I moved slowly and tentatively at first but soon relaxed as I stared down at the rocks visible through the clear water. Edges worn smooth, every shade of brown, gray, white, and black rock lined the floor of the creek. Spiders and water bugs skipped along the surface; minnows and crawdads scuttled around my ankles and feet. My surroundings became clear and precious as I progressed upstream in the gentle moving water. As I turned the corner beyond our usual swimming hole I saw something floating toward me, a branch. It was not just any branch but one that had been perfectly cleaned by beavers. I picked it up and studied the work. It would make a wonderful walking staff. I thanked the goddess of water, and the beavers, for my gift.

Having gone through menopause at what I assumed was very young age (my periods ended before I was 40), I thought the surgery several years later would change little about my life. Despite experiencing insomnia and a few hot flashes, I still felt young. While menopause refers to the cessation of menses, it is also the stage of life that we associate with growing old, grandmothers and crones. But many women seem to be racing through the maiden and mother stages and reaching the last phase at younger ages. The average age of menopause is now 50.5 years. Growing up I always pictured women in "the change" as old and tired creatures. Women are living longer lives now, leaving us living almost half of our life as crones. According to the Centers for Disease Control, the estimated life expectancy for an American-born white woman in 1900 was 48.7; for a black woman it was

33.5. The same statistic for women born in 2003 is 80.5 and 76.1, respectively.

In the myth of Sedna, once she falls to the ocean she realizes that she has lost the things that were once important to her. Looking around, she sees that it is up to her to be the strong one.

This is very much what it is like going through menopause. Each step toward becoming a crone is emotional and often turbulent. It's a very watery ride. Our bodies, once lithe and agile, become more fragile and less flexible. Skin once smooth and unblemished becomes paper-thin and speckled with age spots. The even keel that our co-workers were amazed by is replaced, however temporarily, by crying jags and hot flashes. Looking in the mirror, we can be surprised and frustrated by drooping eyelids and dark hairs sprouting on our chins. All signs of aging. All signs of change. We have lost our youth.

As we settle into this change though, a healing begins. We accept the alterations that nature is taking on bodies, maybe we pull a few tricks of our own, dye our hair or wax our upper lip, but all the while we begin to feel the surges. Surges of creativity, surges of activism, surges of anger, and surges of hilarity.

Looking around us we see the challenges that the world offers. We also see the women, the crones, who are tackling these challenges. Who can look at women over 50 such as Starhawk or Susan Sarandon and not be impressed with the verve, creativity and strength? So as crones we must embrace the challenge of Sedna, accept the changes that menopause brings and know that with these changes come strength.

— Denise Bell

**Sedna's fingers and arms became sea animals that fed Sedna's people, but only if they obeyed the rules she had set forth for them. If they did not, Sedna's hands would ache and the sea animals would abandon the hunters so that the people would starve. Then, a shaman had to travel through treacherous underwater territories to ease Sedna's pain so that she would then instruct the animals to give themselves to the hunters to feed the people.**

*Through pain, beauty is born. Fiery bursts*

*release us, swirling upwards into the coolness of the water. Our Mother descends, the darkness of the frigid ocean slowly engulfing her. Her raven hair gently frames her pained, upturned face as she watches her newly-born swim towards the surface, looking for their first breath of air.*

Though depression has knocked on my door and paid me numerous visits throughout my life, six years ago it became an unwelcome guest, setting up home with no leave date in sight.

Beginning with 9/11, to which I was witness, then growing stronger with my father's deterioration and eventual death due to Alzheimer's, my depression grew deeper and darker throughout the years, stealing away my personality, only to replace it with an uncharacteristically angry and despairing shell.

After suffering for several months, I realized that it was important to do something to help break free from the hold of my depression. The desire to transform my negative energy into positive eventually became so driving that it overcame my mental and physical stagnation. It was then that I thought about concentrating on something I really believed in, something I've always had an interest in, and something I wanted to become more involved in. I looked towards volunteering with wildlife.

Since I was a child, I have always found a sense of comfort and peace in the company of animals, whether domestic or wild, or covered in fur, feathers, fins or scales.

As an only child, I more often than not relished the company of neighborhood pets over my peers. Bird watching was a regular activity of mine, providing me solace. Creatures of all kinds felt like brothers and sisters to me, giving me the support and strength I needed.

After doing some research, I applied for a volunteer position at the aquarium, specifically looking to work with animal life, and a month later I was assigned to the jellyfish and other invertebrates. It was the first time in six months that I found a genuine sense of hope and happiness within myself.

*Fingernails transform into the silvery rainbow scales of fish, the flesh of fingers taking on the plump bodies of seals, walrus, orcas and sea lions. Bones take the shape of the gleaming ivory of the walruses' tusks. Our mother's blood fills us all, and connects*

*us forever to her and her ancestors*

As I pass through the entrance gate on my way to the jellyfish exhibit, I can see the California Sea Lions, Smokey and Cleo, gliding about their tank, criss-crossing each other's paths, eyes closed. Stopping at one of the windows offering a view into their tank, I gaze within, admiring their beauty and fluid grace. Sensing me, they break their watery ballet and halt midway through a turn, returning to the window they just passed, curious. Two faces stare back at me, one a deep burnt umber, bristling with whiskers, and expressive dark eyes. The other face is smaller, hovering beneath the first, a silver-brown, with kind, curious eyes. Gazing into these two pairs of eyes, I feel as though I am communing with the divine and a deep sense of connection washes over me.

*We provide nourishment...but after a time, rituals aren't followed, taboos are broken, secrets are kept and follies of the tribe accumulate. Drifting down to the ocean floor, they find their way into our Mother's dwelling, and burrow deep into her raven hair. Sedna's hair begins to knot and tangle. Her mutilated stumps are useless for combing and plaiting her hair, and as her frustration grows, we are drawn to her. Leaving the world of men, we swim down to surround her, comforting her in any way we can, listening to her cries.*

As I step into the briny darkness of the jellyfish hall, I find solace. Each weekend as I help feed the jellyfish, or hand pieces of clam to the dusty blue brittle star, or even clean the tanks, I am humbled. That there is such beauty in even the tiniest anemone never ceases to amaze me. The vastness and variety of the marine world is tremendous, as well as fascinating, and I am fortunate to have been given the honor of tending these creatures. I can only hope more of humankind awakens to appreciate the ocean and its inhabitants before it is too late and Sedna calls her children to her permanently.

Through our pain, beauty is born. Whether it is the pain of depression, death, divorce, or even birth, we are given the chance to transform our pain into something joyful, beautiful, and life affirming.

— Carisa Swenson

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# Aunt Hattie

by Vila Spiderhawk

I don't remember ever meeting Aunt Hattie for the first time. She was just always there—a cherished friend of my mother's who lived in a small red-brick cube of a house in Somers Point near Ocean City, New Jersey. To my childish eyes she looked positively ancient, though I'm sure she was only in her sixties. We visited her often when I was a girl, packing up the car with fresh vegetables and fruit and bread and confections my mother had baked. We never took meat. Uncle Charlie, Hattie's husband, was an avid fisherman. Even in winter we dined on fluke or mackerel that he had caught and filleted.

Regardless of the weather, Uncle Charlie could be found fishing at the wharf before dawn. Though Aunt Hattie had an equal passion for the sea, she wasn't one for rod and reel. But when we weren't sculpting the shell-littered sand into unidentifiable objects or frolicking long enough in the waves to have our lips turn blue, we were crabbing at the mild-mannered bay.

Kneeling on the ragged blanket we had spread as protection from the splinters of the pier, we'd lower our rickety maple-slatted traps, tie the ropes, and settle in to wait. Finding dolphins and elephants in the clouds, we'd dangle bare feet in the nippy salt water or huddle close for warmth when the chill wind nibbled at our noses and ears. We'd suck into our lungs the bay's mollusk breath and, in whispers appropriate to a church, we'd marvel at the beauty of the sea.

Her turquoise eyes squinting in the afternoon glare, Aunt Hattie would scrape her steel wool hair from her cheek and remind me that all life came from the sea, pointing out that humans are mostly made of water and citing the salt of our tears and our sweat as proof of our aquatic origins. "The ocean is your mother," she'd often say. "Mine too, and so I bring all my worries to her. And if I'm very quiet and listen, really listen, she always has a solution."

As a child of the city, I appreciated the silver-fringed beauty of the waves. I loved how they mirrored the moods of the sky, how they rushed to the shore bringing presents of shells. But I couldn't figure out how to listen to their voices. I couldn't decipher their language. Nonetheless, while my muscles would tighten to knots and I'd

demand that the boisterous gulls stop their squawking, Aunt Hattie always promised I'd be able to hear when I really needed the help.

I was thirteen years old when Aunt Hattie died of an aneurism in her sleep. I floated on a stupor of disbelief through the jungle of strangers, the drone of liturgy, and the suffocating odor of flowers and perfume. And after the service I pleaded with my parents to drive me to the bay. Wisely giving me the quiet to mourn in my own way, they comforted each other in the car while I went alone to the pier.

Shivering and hugging my knees to my chest, I guzzled salty wind and harangued the gray-blue tide with grief-whittled howling invectives. And when my child's arsenal was empty save for tears, I erupted into rib-bruising sobs. I fell backwards and rolled to a fetal position pouring soul crushing loss through the splintery slats, until spiky salt tears degenerated to desiccated wails then to whimperers. Spent at last and limp, I pulled my collar to my ears and surrendered to the leaden gray lump of inexpressible dejection in my heart.

I might not have noticed the reassuring rhythm of water sloshing at the piles had the weather not whispered with Aunt Hattie's voice, "Listen, little one! Listen." For a moment the gulls stopped berating each other and turned their attention to me. "Hear her!" they ordered, and so I did and found comfort in the sound.

Half a century later, I live in the mountains far from the New Jersey shore. But whenever I remember my time with Aunt Hattie I can sculpt dampened sand into any shape I want or play in the waves or go crabbing on the pier. And each time I meditate on the surf I find Aunt Hattie sitting next to me. So dissolved into each other are the memories of Aunt Hattie and Mother Sea that I wouldn't know how to scoop one from my mind without dipping into the other. In truth, I see no reason to try.

Together they have taught me that life ebbs and flows, depending on the planets' pull. They've taught me to

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# THEALOGICAL MUSINGS



by Judith Laura

## Death Reminds Us

Marione, who guided this publication so well since the mid-1990s, is the second woman I knew personally to die of lung cancer within the last two years. The first was my life-long friend, Janet. As with Marione, there was little warning and death came quickly.

Janet and I met one spring day when our mothers, strangers at that point, walked down the street from opposite directions pushing our strollers. They stopped, as mothers do, to admire each other's tots, and Janet and I thought we were cute, too. We lived a few blocks from each other and after that were inseparable through our school years. In thinking of how she died,

my mind is drawn back to a scene when we were 12 years old:

Janet and I are in her livingroom, where I often ended up after school so we can watch Bandstand together (my family didn't have a TV). On the coffee table sits fancy pottery stocked with cigarettes (her parents didn't smoke, but at that time it was considered polite to have cigs for your guests, just as you might have candy for them today). Wanting to be as cool as the Bandstand kids, Janet and I decide to light up for the first time. But we can't get those darn cigs lit! Why? We were trying to light them before putting them in our mouths! A few weeks later another friend showed me how to put a cigarette between my lips and inhale as I lit it. After that I smoked about a half a pack daily until I was in my early 20s, when I began getting frequent "colds" (allergies I realize now), and skipped smoking whenever my throat got sore. After one of these time-outs, I withdrew a cig from a pack open in my purse for at least a week and lit up. It tasted horrible. "What do I need these for?" I said, putting out the cig and tossing the pack in the trash. I never smoked again, one of the lucky ones able to stop before I became addicted.

But Janet never smoked at all.

As adults, we lived about 100 miles apart and didn't get together again until the early '90s, when our children were in high school and college. We visited each other's homes, met the families, but sometimes we'd go a long time between contacts.

In Spring 2003 I had a dream consisting entirely of a very loud male voice booming: "Janet is dead." I tried to convince myself it was "only a dream," but called her house, got the machine and left a message. After a few weeks and no return call I tried again. This time she answered and said she was glad I had called. She sounded a little funny though. I asked how she was. "Oh, I'm fine," she said, "except for this little cough. But the main thing is my daughter." Long pause. Then she told me her daughter had died in an accident. I sensed she didn't want to go into detail on the phone and, because she was packing to go away with her husband for the summer, we made plans to get together at my home in the fall. We exchanged email addresses because neither of us was easy to reach by phone. She didn't have a computer at home, but she had a work email.

After we hung up, I decided I had heard the dream's message wrong, that the booming voice probably had said, "Janet's daughter is dead," and I just hadn't picked up the word, "daughter."

I waited until October and when I still hadn't heard from Janet, I emailed her, reminding her that she had planned to come visit me in the fall. No answer. I waited a month trying not to be insulted, and emailed again. Again, no answer. By this time it was winter and hard to make travel plans, so I pushed it to the back of my mind. And it stayed there, I'm now sad to say, until late spring when I sent another email. Still no response. I felt panicky and decided to do a web search to see if I could find out if she was even working at the same place. That's how I found the obituary. She had died the day before! The obituary didn't give cause of death.

For a few days I was bewildered. I didn't want to bother her family, plus I was feeling bad because they hadn't notified me (please folks, when a person dies, have someone go through their phone book and notify her friends!). I decided to call her workplace. Janet died of lung cancer, a co-worker told me. Lung cancer?! "But she didn't smoke!" I protested. "Yes, I know," her co-worker said.

Several months later came the news stories about lung cancer becoming more common in non-smokers, particularly women. I believe NIH has begun at least one study on it. I hope they make it quick. Get off the stick, people, and figure this one out! It shouldn't be hard. Before smoking was prohibited in many workplaces, were women more likely than men to be in situations where they were exposed to second-hand smoke? Were women more likely than men to be placed in areas where they were exposed to cancer-causing fumes in addition to tobacco smoke? (For example, in the late '60s, my "office" was actually a desk in a copy room and the copy machines at that time had very stinky fumes. I finally got myself out of there because the fumes were giving me headaches and nausea.)

Marione's passing also brought to my mind something else: Many of us have noted what seems to be an inordinate number of deaths among political and spiritual feminists in the last few years. We know there is nothing ominous going on, yet sometimes the natural order of things can grab even us hard.

We are witnessing the beginning of the passing of the generation who raised our consciousness, opened career doors, demanded focus on women's health and an end to violence against women, and who restored Goddess.

Some of these women may have been in their 70s and 80s. They were true pioneers for the supposedly "silent" generation. But most deaths we notice are among age groups known as "war babies" and "baby boomers"—people now in their 60s and 50s. Their deaths often catch us off guard, perhaps because we hear or read almost daily that people—and particularly women—are living long lives, the average life span now being to the mid-80s. Why, then, are so many of our sisters dying in their 50s and 60s? But there is nothing unusual here. When we think about it rationally, we know that for the average life span to be in the mid-80s, some people will live to 100 or so, and some will die in their 70s, 60s, 50s, and earlier.

Most of us in Goddess spirituality view death as part of life. Some of us may not believe in an afterlife and are comfortable with death as nature's recycling. Others of us, including me on most days, believe in some sort of persistence of consciousness after death. We hope we will meet again dear ones who have passed over. Whatever our belief about life after death, we still miss and mourn them here and now. Yet all of us can be inspired by the contributions of those who have passed, respect and if necessary care for those of this innovative generation who are still with us, and together continue this work.

*Judith Laura is author of *She Lives!* The Return of Our Great Mother (1989), Goddess Spirituality for the 21st Century (1997), and two novels, the most recent of which is *Beyond All Desiring*, a finalist for the Media Darlings' 2006 Word/Work Book Award. Her artwork is available on <http://cafepress.com/judithlaura> and <http://zazzle.com/judithlaura>. She has a tarot practice in the Washington DC, area, a website at <http://www.judithlaura.com>, and blogs at <http://medusacoils.blogspot.com>.*



*Photo of Judith Laura taken by C. P. Thomas*

# The Money Crone Talks Dollars and Sense

Gail Shapiro interview by Diane Saarinen

The facts concerning older women and money can be frightening. Women, on the average, live longer than men and need to plan for more years of retirement. According to the AARP, it is older women — not men — who are more likely to live below the poverty line. And if a woman does choose to marry a male partner, the average age of widowhood is 56. We women (no matter what our age) can stand to learn more about what often remains a bit of a mystery in our lives — money! *The Beltane Papers* is happy to interview Gail Shapiro, Founder and President of Womankind Educational and Resource Center, Inc, and a self-professed crone.

**TBP:** Your book, *Money Order: The Money Management Guide for Women*, reminds me much of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. What brought about starting a grassroots, feminist collective with a focus on financial literacy and empowerment for women?

**GAIL SHAPIRO:** We actually did not start out doing financial literacy. Womankind Educational and Resource Center, Inc., was founded in 1993 as a full-service, volunteer-run, women's resource center in Wayland, Massachusetts (outside of Boston). We offered workshops in many areas, including work, relationships, family, spirituality, legal, and health issues. We also served as a walk-in center, to which women came seeking information about and resources for these and other topics.(Remember, this was in the days before the Internet!) In 1995, we realized that many of the questions women had, had to do with money—or more specifically, our lack of knowledge about and comfort with money. We looked for a curriculum that we could adapt for our community, and found none. So we brought together a group of 12 women, half were financial professionals, the other half not—all volunteers—and charged them with the task of developing a curriculum for a six-week program of classes for community women of all ages, life stages, and economic levels. We intended to do a “trial” class for 20 women—and then evaluate it



—but so many women signed up that we ended up doing five classes that first year, beginning in March 1996. Obviously, we met a need!

**TBP:** How do you define financial literacy and why it is so important to women?

**GS:** This could take pages and pages! “Financial literacy” is teaching ourselves to be familiar with how money works, and what it can—and cannot—do. Another aspect is addressing our feelings about money, and how they may help or hinder us from making appropriate financial choices, at every stage of our lives. Remember that historically, money has had very little connection to the labor and lives of women. For eons, what was known as “women’s work”—teaching, caring for, nurturing the young, sick, elderly; home and hearth, etc.—has been unpaid work. When women earned money, it was because we were venturing out into the world of commerce - “men’s world.” So it is no surprise that many of us feel uncomfortable or “clueless” around money! But even having thousands of years of “genetic memory” against us is not an excuse to not learn now!

There are many reasons why women need to take charge of our own financial well-being. Women live longer than men, and so our savings have to last longer; an unprecedented number of women do not live with a male partner, either by choice or by circumstance; of those women who currently are supported by someone else (parents, partner, government), 90% will at some point be self-supporting; not even 50% of women have pensions of any kind; the amount women earn compared to men went down last year (back to 75 cents to the dollar); and on and on and on — we cannot afford to stick our heads in the sand, or to make excuses as to why it’s ok to ignore our finances. Even those women currently happily married to well-providing partners need to be aware that circumstances can change at any instance. In the words of one of our students, “Marriages end for both temporal and intemperate reasons.” Women get sick. Older women

who are no longer able to generate income due to disability or illness may have to depend on their children, or their friends, if they don't have enough retirement savings.

I've seen women pick up (the latest) financial books, take one look at the "What you need to save for retirement" charts, and put the book down, saying, "I'll never get there, why bother?" Well, the answer is above. Women who depend on someone else to handle their money are throwing their power away. This makes me sad. We have worked so hard in the last 40 years to gain advantages for women —in the workplace, in legal proceedings, in marriage, in politics — and it is distressing to see women just give it all away.

**TBP:** You mention women "giving it all away." Regarding unpaid, and even volunteer, work — why is it so hard for women to put a monetary value on their work? And in terms of paid work, why do women have a tendency to undervalue their contributions?

**GS:** Whew! This is a BIG question. Part one, I think I answered in the last question. It is hard to put a value on our giving/volunteering work because that is what our mothers, grandmothers, et al, did and what we learned as the norm. Women's primary value is *relationship*. In contrast with men, who are OK with being "one-up" or (less-attractively) "one-down" to others—as long as they know where they stand in the linear world they inhabit, women are more comfortable when all are equal. It's why young women might be outraged to be asked to fetch coffee for the boss, while a young man would see it as part of his job as the underling. It is also why we often have a hard time being the supervisor in a work situation — it interferes with our natural desire to have everyone be the same, and, of course, to have everyone like us.

Now, of course, these are generalizations, and there are many exceptions. We undervalue our contributions in the work force because 1) we don't always recognize our own worth and 2) we don't have the role models to show us that we are worth more, and to teach us how to get it. That is why it is so vital for women who are successful in the work place to take the time to nurture younger women. And why it is important that we, who are conscious about these issues, take the time to teach our daugh-

ters, our nieces, our granddaughters, and the girl next door. Men (and the male-dominated work place) are not going to give up their power voluntarily — frankly, why would anyone in power give it away just to be nice? Not too likely. So we struggle on....

By the way, the value of the job of stay-at-home, full-time mom is now calculated as in excess of \$134K. (This assumes hiring replacement for all the functions a mother normally performs.) An hour of volunteer work is valued at \$18.04 (Independent sector, 2005).

**TBP:** What are some common challenges women face when managing their money?

**GS:** I have to think a lot about this one. I wasn't sure whether you meant "in beginning to deal with money" or in actually dealing with money. I suspect maybe the former, so I will address that. And I am assuming that your readers are mostly middle-class, or at least living above poverty level, so I will speak to that group (I would answer this differently for women living on welfare):

Based on what I hear from our students, and from the women in our community who DON'T take our classes, the most common challenge that women



face about starting to manage their money is, for lack of a better word, complacency. That is, "I don't have to think about this today; I'll think about it tomorrow." I call it the "Scarlett O'Hara syndrome." These women may earn enough to cover their needs and wants, or they may have a partner who is the main breadwinner. For these women, there is no urgent need to "do money," except to deposit the paycheck and pay the bills.

Another way to describe it is the "stick your head in the sand" method of dealing with money — that is, not at all — until a crisis strikes: the electricity gets turned off — not because you had to choose whether to pay it or the rent — but because you left the bill in your other handbag and, well, forgot. A couple of times. Or you get a notice that your CD is due (that one you opened two years ago at 2.95%) and the deadline passes, and along with it the chance to reinvest the same money at the current 4.95%. Or, worst of all, the IRS comes calling for the 2002 tax return you forgot to file, and wants their \$7500 in interest and penalties, along with the

## **Passing Lakshmi's Gifts Around the Circle: Shopping as Spiritual Practice**

by Carolyn Lee Boyd

As I have gotten older, I have come to see that most aspects of my life—whether work, family, social interaction, creativity, or most anything else—take place within circles of women. Whether I am sitting on a council or a management team, having a party or internet chat, or taking care of family members, most everything I do happens in community with other women.

One very special circle that is global and has economic, political, and spiritual effects comes together through the jewelry and clothing I wear, the food I eat, the gifts I give, and other objects I buy. More and more of the things I purchase are created by women and sold as a means for them to become independent, to serve their communities, and to care for and educate their children. As I write, a red basket made by women from Rwanda graces my file cabinet; beaded necklaces from Uganda swirl in my jewelry bowl; vests, pants and dresses from India hang in my closet; wooden bracelets from Nepal click on my wrist; soup mixes from Chicago sit in my sister's kitchen; and a purse made by a teen in a residential program in my town lies in my closet.

Sometimes these items are made by individual women, sometimes by cooperatives they have formed themselves, and sometimes by social service projects of non-profit organizations. Some of them are sold over the internet, some at craft fairs, and some in retail stores that may or may not be exclusively dedicated to offering items of this kind. Some of these items are produced and traded as "fair trade," which simply indicates that producers and importers agree to a variety of business practices, including providing the people who make the product a reasonable wage, safe working conditions, and opportunities for advancement; equal treatment of women; and environmental sustainability, among others.

While many times the marketing of these items implies that I am doing a favor to the craftswomen by buying their products, in reality I am receiving much more than the cost of the object. Each of these is, to me, a real link to the woman who made it. She has put her imagination, her time and effort, her dedication, her hopes and dreams,

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back taxes. This is same driver that has raised the average American credit card debt to nearly \$10,000! (Charge today, pay..... in 21 years, if you make only the minimum payments and do not charge anything else).

So, not dealing, disorganization, lack of interest, are the main barriers. Money is boring. Money is not our highest priority when we also are responsible for and to job, kids, partner, elderly parents, house, garden, pets, friends, and oh, maybe find a bit of time to exercise, meditate and take care of ourselves too. Yeah, like I'd rather sit and read the *Wall Street Journal* financial pages than a good juicy novel when I get a rare 20 minutes to myself.

But if you mean #2, I'd say probably "lack of confidence." Some women think that they are "bad" at math, "bad" at money, and so just never get started, say, saving and investing. We need to understand that money is just a language, and that we have most of the skills we need, it's just a question of applying those skills to a new area. The worst mistake any woman could possibly make about money—worse than a "bad" investment, worse than handing out free money to their kids (alas, sometimes even to grown children) — is to turn over their financial power to someone else, be it their spouse or life partner, financial adviser, or business partner. When you give someone control over your money, you are literally giving them control over your entire life. Even a partner you love and trust may not be savvy about money (and if this partner is male, unfortunately, he and you may think he is supposed to be good with money, for we are raised to believe that, and we all know how good men are at asking for help and direction!).

Another challenge is that there is SO much information — much of it competing — out there. The best thing a woman who wants to get a handle on her money is to read one good book (we, of course, recommend *Money Order*), on basic financial management. The first step is to make sure she has good insurance, to protect her from possible disaster. Then saving, then investing. Also, working on increasing her income. The rest is in the book, I guess. But that's a start.

**TBP:** *Women live longer than men and apparently, are more likely to be poor than older men. You're not a licensed financial adviser, but you are a financial educator. What should women be doing now in regard to planning for retirement?*

**GS:** Since planning for retirement depends on so many individual factors, there really is no “one size fits all” advice I can give, other than the standard advice, which is to save as much as you can. If your employer offers a 401k, put in as much as you are allowed; start and fully fund an IRA or Roth IRA, etc. The books on retirement normally say that one needs about 70% of pre-retirement income, but that is not a given for everyone — it depends on what your lifestyle might be after retirement. If

your plans are to travel around the world, you would need a great deal more. If you and a group of women friends all plan to sell your homes and start a collective, you might need a great deal less. So this is one area where I strongly suggest women to get professional advice. Go and find a trustworthy financial planner and talk to her about your needs, and what you should be doing now. The most important thing is — don’t fail to plan! Age sixty-five or so will be here before you know it. Don’t think — “oh I will never have enough, so why bother?” — that’s the same kind of stick-your-head-in-the-sand thinking I already discussed. Know that the fear of being a “bag lady” in later years affects most women—across the economic spectrum. So plan NOW to be a long-living woman with enough resources to live a full and productive life.

**TBP:** Your own focus in the field of finances is charitable giving. Can you tell us a little about that?

**GS:** Sure. I think of charitable giving as a profoundly creative act, which can nurture you as well as those to whom you give. But, in order for your giving to be effective and beneficial, you need to have a plan. Otherwise, you will be giving reactively, (as when you just respond to those many solicitations you get in the mail or on the telephone) rather than *proactively*.

What did you learn about giving from your family while growing up, and how does that influence you today? How will you decide which causes to support, and at what level? How do you say “no” to personal requests for those you won’t support? What will influence your giving decisions? What are your reasons for giving? What do you want your



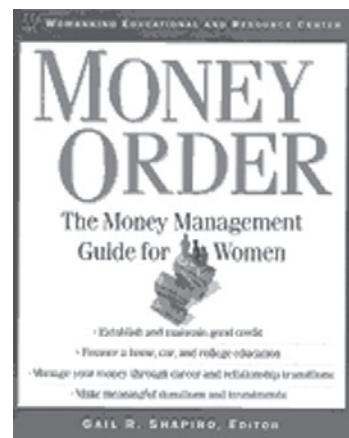
gifts to accomplish? What do you want to get from your gifts? How involved do you want to be with any given charity? Do you want to give money, time, goods, or a combination? Who besides you will be involved in these decisions? How do you set a budget for charitable giving? These are some questions to ponder as you begin.

Surprisingly, the main reason women do not give more—or as much as we could/should—is NOT because we feel like we don’t have enough to share. It is because we are not sure how our gift will be used; if it will be used well and wisely. We want our gifts to count.

There are also gender differences in giving. Say, if two guys are playing golf and one says, “Hey, I support the NAME OF ORGANIZATION, how’s about throwing a couple hundred bucks their way?” the other is likely to respond BECAUSE his friend/colleague asked. A woman, on the other hand, will generally NOT make more than a token gift, even if it’s her best friend asking, unless she believes in the mission of the organization. So contrary to what one might expect, women give to causes, men give to people. And many more women than men give anonymously.

**TBP:** Thanks so much for chatting with us! I feel there are still so many subjects left to discuss...

**GS:** Thanks, Diane, for giving me the opportunity to talk with you and your readers. For more information on Womankind and the Financial Literacy Project, I invite readers to visit the web site <http://www.womankindflp.org/>. For more information on charitable giving, non-profit management, and fund raising, my web site is <http://www.gailshapiro.com/>. I welcome readers’ questions, and look forward to hearing from them.



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*everything we do in the magazine, and for many of us, in our personal lives as well. Indeed she changed everyone whose life she touched and we are all better for having known her.*

### **Letter in response to TBP's invitation to discuss our readers' view on menstrual suppression**

I just wanted to be normal.

As a post menopausal crone, I no longer have periods, but I remember them well and how I felt about them.

I was one of those completely irregular women and could go up to three months without a period. This was rather distressing and frustrating during those times when we were trying to get pregnant. But my primary feeling was that I wanted just to be normal, to have periods every 28 days like my mother and my friends. Not having periods was like not being completely woman.

It has to do with the natural rhythms of our world and our bodies. For me it was more about being normal, which included being capable of bearing children, but I have a feeling if I had experienced normal periods I would have welcomed some relief, even though I don't like to mess with my endocrine system.

~Casey Archer

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celebrate the high tides of joy and to use the low times for introspection. They've taught me that in nature all destruction creates an opportunity for something new. They've taught me patience, which wasn't easy to do. And they've taught me to love courageously. Together they have taught me many lessons through the years, and, when needed, they have soothed my troubled heart. And so, when I'm worried or challenged or sad, I have learned to reach out for Aunt Hattie's warmth and for the rhythmical wisdom of the sea.

Vila SpiderHawk ([www.vilaspiderhawk.com](http://www.vilaspiderhawk.com)), author of *Hidden Passages: Tales to Honor the Crones*, lives in the woods of Pennsylvania with her husband, their six cats, and their many woodland friends.

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and her artistry into making it. Each of them is, to me, a sacred object, and each of the women who made the objects a member of a circle I cherish. I am honored to be part of a circle made up of all the women who have made the articles that grace my life and I am indebted to them all.

Of course, this kind of economic arrangement between women is not new. My great-grandmother became responsible for supporting herself and her young daughter in 1918 after her husband died. She knew how to sew and so, like many other women in her situation, became a seamstress, sewing dresses for other women in her community. Women she knew benefited from buying her handmade clothing and, with the money she made, she supported herself and my grandmother. Whether making dresses, exchanging sewing in quilting bees, assisting with labor as midwives, healing through herbs, or through millions of other acts over the millennia, women have exchanged their time, labor, and skill with one another.

And so, I see every purchase as contributing to a global network of women supporting and gifting one another that has a long and proud history. I hope that I am giving back to the larger global circle through not just my cash, but also by contributing my own skill, my writing. The articles, poems and stories I write for women's publications are what I give to the worldwide circle of women. While the women who create the items I buy

may not ever read what I write, others do, and perhaps are motivated to contribute their own gifts, then enlarging and energizing the circle as a whole.

How can you join this circle? Crafted items made by women are available through many resources. Many of the ads in *The Beltane Papers* feature such artistic creations. Some of those I mentioned above can be purchased from:

**Bead for Life** at beadforlife.org (beaded jewelry made by women from Uganda)

**Marketplace of India** at marketplaceindia.com (clothing and home decor made by women from India)

**Ten Thousand Villages** at tenthousandvillages.com and **A Greater Gift** at agreatergift.org (both offer a variety of items from around the world, including the US)

**The Women's Bean Project** at womensbeanproject.org (food products made by women from the US)

Some sites we found while researching this article that we will be shopping at in the future include:

**Equal Exchange** at equalexchange.com (coffee, tea, and chocolate from Africa, Asia, and Latin America)

**Global Exchange** at store.gxonlinestore.org (a variety of items from around the world)

**Global Sister Goods** at globalsistergoods.com (jewelry, accessories, home decorating items made by women from around the world)

**The Enterprising Kitchen** at theenterprisingkitchen.org (bath and spa products made by women from the US)

For more information on "fair trade," go to:

**International Fair Trade Association** at ifat.org

**Fair Trade Federation** at fairtradefederation.org

To learn more about using your dollars to make a difference in the world, go to:

**Coop America** at coopamerica.org

*"You don't get to choose how you're going to die. Or when. You can decide how you're going to live now."*

—Joan Baez





**Samhain   Yule   Imbolc   Ostara   BELTANE   Litha   Lughnasadh   Mabon**

# MAZU FESTIVAL

by Paola Gianturco

When she was born, she didn't cry so her parents named her Moniang, "The Silent One." The Lin family had lived in the Fujian province for fifty-three generations and many had fished for a living themselves. Moniang's father, a village official, was respected for solving problems for the local fishermen who worked the waters of the East China Sea. Moniang would come to help the fishermen as well.

Moniang was born in 960 A.D., so what is known about her life is a mixture of legend and history, but it's clear that she was both precocious and intuitive. By age eight, she was writing poetry. By eleven, she began meditating. At twelve, though her family was Buddhist, she was accepted to study with the Taoist priest, Hsuan T'Ung. At sixteen, a spirit appeared to her near a well and gave her a potent charm. From that moment on, Moniang demonstrated supernatural powers that related to water. It is said that she could convert a straw mat into a sail and ride the ocean waves.

One day when Moniang was nineteen, she dozed off while she was weaving. The men in the family had gone fishing, leaving her at home with her mother and five sisters. She had a nightmare—the boat carrying her father and brother capsized and she watched her father slip below the water's surface. When she awoke, she searched the beach and found his body.

Thereafter, she was able to anticipate danger and spare fishermen from cyclones, storms, reefs, tides, rogue waves, and all kinds of watery catastrophes.

The typhoon season lasts from May to November in this coastal region. Of course, since tenth-century fishermen had no technology to forecast the weather, their work was perilous. So Moniang's weather predictions were invaluable.

(Fisherman in other times and other places could have used her help. Over the last half of the nineteenth century, the city of Gloucester, England, lost thirty fishermen per each thousand—a death rate more than triple that of Americans who died in combat in the Second World War).

Moniang had two assistants, brothers who originally served a tyrant general, and so had the experience and skills that helped her to locate fishermen in trouble a long distance away. The brothers' names translate as "Eyes that See a Thousand Miles" and "Ears that Follow the Wind." These piratical fellows were always portrayed with ill-kempt beards, pointed teeth, and wild eyes. Moniang never married and there are stories about her spurning these characters—although from the appearances of these rogues, romance seems mighty improbable.

In 987 A.D., at twenty-seven, Moniang celebrated the Double Yang Festival, which is held on the ninth day of the ninth month of the lunar calendar. On this holiday,

by Paola Gianturco  
An excerpt from her book  
*Celebrating Women*



everyone climbs hills to admire the scenery. But Moniang decided to sit at the summit of Mount Mei Feng on Mei Zhou Island and look at the beautiful blue water below. From this location, according to legend, she rode the wind to heaven and joined the immortals. The spot where she sat is now called Ascension-to-Heaven Rock.

The main Mazu Temple on Mei Zhou Island stands at the very spot where Moniang last enjoyed the view. At the top, a forty-five foot tall statue of her continues to survey the terrain. Stone statues enact her legends in a mountaintop garden of trees, rocks, lantana, and bougainvillea.

Sometime during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), Moniang was given the name Mazu—from *ma*, meaning “mother,” and *zu*, which means “ancestor”—and became a goddess, Protectoress of the Fishermen. Over time, Mazu was given twenty-eight honorific titles—Goddess of the Sea, Almighty Protector, Guardian Angel of Seafaring People.

It is said that Mazu helped Kublai Khan’s navy conquer Taiwan in the thirteenth century. Goddesses who make historical contributions are given promotions, so in 1683 Mazu was named Tian Hou, Empress of Heaven.

Over time, people who had nothing to do with water began to petition her for fertility, health, and wealth. Then, Mazu’s titles became even more encompassing—Ancient Mother, Queen of Heaven.

Yan Jin Zhou, the temple scholar at the main temple, describes Mazu’s transition from Protectoress of the Fishermen to Queen of Heaven: “She sets a good example for women to be caring, warm-hearted and benevolent.”

Mazu’s folk religion, which encompasses both Buddhist and Taoist beliefs, spread as Chinese citizens



*Illustration by Carisa Swensen*

world.

On Mazu’s birthday, sea creatures large and small, even whales, are said to swim near her temple in the Pescadores Islands to pay their respects.

*Paola Gianturco has worked as a photojournalist for the past ten years, documenting women's lives in forty countries. Her book, *Celebrating Women* (Powerhouse Books, 2004) was the subject of the first exhibit ever curated by the International Museum of Women in San Francisco. She is also the author/photographer of the best-selling book *In Her Hands: Craftswomen Changing the World* (Powerhouse Books, 2004). She has appeared on the Oprah Winfrey Show and her images of women artisans have been published in Marie Claire, The San Francisco Examiner Magazine, and many other periodicals. Her photographs have been exhibited at the Field Museum in Chicago, the United Nations, the United States Senate, and the Smithsonian Folklife Festival in Washington, D.C.*



# SACRED STONES AND MAGICAL WATERS: A CRONE'S OFFERING TO HER APPRENTICE AND THE PLANET

by Flash Silvermoon



I first started making gem elixirs some 16 years ago following some simple instructions and the advice of my Animal Communication mentor, Kay Cornish Mann. The collecting and study of stones and minerals however began when I was nearly 10 years old. I even wrote my first Earth Science term paper on the Occult properties of Quartz Gems, totally shocking my teacher.

I am now a Crone of 56 years and crystals and sacred stones are like old friends who speak to me in total lucidity creating an entire cornucopia of healing possibilities.

My collection of these amazing rock beings rivals many a museum and is full of hard-to-find high vibrational and exotic pieces. This being said, the notion to create gem elixirs here at Moonhaven seemed like an obvious and wise choice. Gem elixirs are not unlike the more popular flower essences but, in this case, it is the stone or crystal that offers its essence into the water.

Truth be told, my renewed interest in creating these substances was spurred on by the passing of my former wife, Tara Allen, who had often tried to persuade me to make these offerings more available to the public because of my understanding and huge collection of magical stones and crystals.

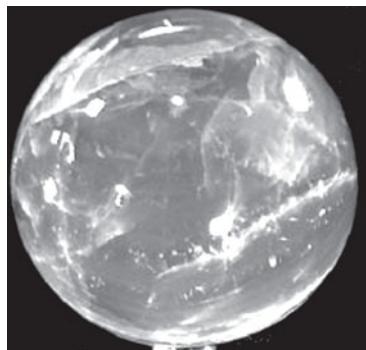
As a memorial to her, I re-created a Sacred Space on my land in a little white screened-in room near the nurturing arms of the Grandmother Tree, an enormous

500+-year-old live oak, which was split in half by lightning some 300 years ago and survived. The Grandmother Tree, a living testimony to survival and transformation, still extends her ever-reaching arms around much of that part of my yard offering her abundant and powerful energy to all who sit at her feet.

Being the custodian to such a Living Goddess, one must honor Her by sharing Her offerings of potent and abundant magical energies and, hence, Moonhaven Magical Gem Elixirs were born. With the help of my apprentice and dear friend, Michelle Mantion, I have created some 20 or more Gem Elixirs since last January.

After an accident that broke my arm and the loss of four members of my Spiritual family in one year, it occurred to me that my knowledge of the stones and many other things had best be passed on to younger women lest this body of learning disappear into the mists of time like it had many times before.

Thirty-something Michelle had proven herself to be both a consistent and supportive helper when I was temporarily disabled and a wise student of the mysteries as well. She became the likely candidate for Sorcerer's Apprentice, if you will, and has proven her mettle time and time again during this process.



The raw materials for creating gem elixirs are quite simple and in abundance here at Moonhaven: crystals, stones and water. You can use red shiso vinegar or alcohol as a fixative once you have created your Mother Essences. You will also need some large glass bowls of various colors to create the elixirs and jars to hold them. A pendulum as a divining tool to double-check your work is a good idea as well. If you are blessed with a sacred space as I am on premises, so much the better but, if not,

one can be created where you feel nature and the Goddess speaking to you.

Before I endeavor to make any of the elixirs I always ask Spirit/The Goddess what I need to make at this time. The first of the Essences that I was “asked” to make was called Blue Wave, which holds the vibration of serenity and peace and includes many beautiful and soothing blue stones: two kinds of Celestite, blue onyx, aquamarine, anhydrite, and angelite. When I first ingested this elixir, I felt like the whole world was at peace and my soul was riding on the crest of the Bliss Wave.

Before we begin each session, we light two white candles and perhaps some sage, cedar and or sweet grass to elevate the energies.

I place the stones in a geometric form with healing intention in a blue glass bowl and Michelle pours water over the stones covering them completely. What a perfect job for an Aquarian.

Now the brew is ready to “cook,” so to speak, and I ring a Tibetan Bell over the bowl to awaken the Spirits of the stones and those present in the room as well. I ask that all the Elementals, Angels, Ancestors, Friends on the other side, Animal Spirits, Goddesses and all positive helpers be present to create and empower these Sacred Waters and Sacred Stones. This outdoor room allows the sunlight, moonlight, and earth energies to infuse the bowl with magical healing vibrations. Usually a few days later, the elixir is “cooked” and it is time to pour it off into separate jars for use later. Always remember to remove the stones before pouring, of course, and now you have a most potent gem elixir. You can put them in a mister bottle to spritz yourselves or your space which actually does the same thing energetically to clear the air as burning sage or incense. Both types of cleansing are facilitated by the production of negative ions which make one feel lighter and clearer.

Because some people cannot tolerate smoke or because some situations make using sacred smoke impossible, these sacred waters can come in very handy. You can also ingest

the liquid as you would a flower essence remembering that a little can go a long way.

It is wise to use the Lunar Cycles to pick the time to create your elixir. New and Full moon energies provide the strongest vibration and you can also use the sacred Holy-days that represent the turning of the Great Wheel such as the Solstice and Equinoxes. Because I am also an Astrologer, I look for powerful aspects between the planets to create something special.

A stone like rose quartz can easily become a simple gem elixir for you by following the steps that I have mentioned and can add a “rosy glow” to any room or give you the little “touch of love” that sometimes can start your day with a smile or add a much needed connection to the vibration of Love. Amethyst can be used for elevation of Spirit. Citrine can offer mental clarity while Smokey quartz grounds and repels negativity. Some of the lithium bearing stones such as kunzite, lepidolite and lithium quartz can be used very effectively as well for creating a most soothing and relaxing mist.

My work with the animals takes me to sanctuaries such as Jungle Friends Primate Sanctuary and the monkeys there benefit tremendously from the lithium mist and joyfully play as I shower them with the cool healing waters. Amazing to see the little monks shift from hyperactivity to peace in the blink of an eye.

Those of you who work in hospitals or other institutions where “smudging” (energy clearing with smoke) would be desired to remove the residual toxic vibrations can use such elixirs to heal the space in a most discreet way.



Some of the many Elixirs we have made over the last year include Fiery Wall of Protection, Blue Wave, Wondrous Waters, Clear Thinking, Global Healing, Lithium, Rose, Apophyge, Peace and Love, 5Th Dimensional, Grounding, Open Heart, Freedom from Bondage, Prosperity, Veil of Isis, and Aura Cleanse, to name a partial list.

The last elixir, Aura

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Cleanse, includes some of my more protective and grounding stones and is a simple and most useful one especially for misting yourself, clients, home, office, stones, animals etc. When you mist yourself or others with this one, it is as if all the gunk and heaviness of the day is lifted and cleared out. It is most refreshing.

I have a very profound and deep knowledge of the essence and workings of the various stones and crystals that share my space. I also have great love and respect for the amazing healers of the mineral world. Part of the choosing of stones for the job engages that knowledge base from the left side of my brain while allowing the “voices” of the particular stones to reach the intuitive side of my brain. If you have several pieces of Smokey quartz for instance, you might use a pendulum over each one to see which stone wants to work with you. In case pendulums are new to you, simply hold one over the crystal and if it moves in a clockwise direction, it’s good to go. Some of you may find that your pendulum gives a “positive” by moving from side to side.

Sometimes, as was in the case with Aura Cleanse, I also place stones and crystals outside but touching the bowl to enhance and strengthen the elixir. I ask Spirit which direction to set the bowl to maximize its efficacy. If I need a new energy, I might set the bowl in the east while if a more watery and reflective energy is needed, setting the bowl in the west would be the best placement.

Aura Cleanse was created by using a foot-long black tourmaline wand for protection, a 10-inch double terminated Smokey laser filled with black tourmaline inclusions to repel negativity, a citrine laser for wisdom and clarity, a beautiful clear Lemurian laser for power, clarity and elevation, a labradorite sphere to open the third eye but with a filter and some blue onyx to soothe. Outside the bowl, I placed large smokey quartz crystals for grounding and protection and some green fluorite in the east to activate the brew.

Since Michelle and I started making these magical concoctions, my black queen cat Jasmine, aka Jazzy Jazz, has offered her presence as a third Priestess to bless and energize the work while China Moon, my Appaloosa Mare Goddess, will often stand by the northern gate of the room to help manifest some horsepower! Jasmine is so enthusiastic about her work here that she will race ahead of us into the room when she even suspects that an elixir is in the wind. China Moon has recently made it clear that she wants to drink some of the elixirs, too, so she

now has her own bowl. She will actually come up to the door of the screened room and tap her hoof until she gets a magical drink.

I must say that the entire process of making a gem elixir fills me with the most illuminating energy and is a joy from start to finish. Having an apprentice who really pays attention to the details of the work is such a blessing as sometimes you can forget a procedure and she can be there to remind you or simply be another set of hands.

When Michelle and I sit in that sacred room to make these elixirs, we are profoundly aware that what we create in the microcosm radiates out to the rest of the world. When we make Global Healing for instance, we offer our energies up in this way for the Elevation of the Planet. We always conclude our work by again ringing the Tibetan Bell and thanking all our Divine Helpers for co-creating these amazing sacred waters..Moonhaven Magical Gem Elixirs! Blessed be.

*F l a s h  
Silvermoon is  
the author and  
creator of The  
Wise Woman's  
Tarot, a 25 year  
labor of love  
and wisdom. In  
it, she brings the  
multicultural*



*images and heritage of the Divine Feminine out of the closet and into the modern world. She has been working with the Tarot as a psychic, teacher and healer for over 36 years. She is equally at home reading an astrological chart as delivering a past life regression, stone healing, flower essence or gem elixir treatment. A respected public figure in the community, her noted work with Womanspirit Rising gave birth to four Wise Woman's Festivals. Works in progress include The Planetary Playbook, Temple of Isis, and Lifetime Companions: Love Never Dies. Her incredible work healing animals also is highlighted in a new anthology, Angel Horses: Divine Messengers of Hope, which features the story of her magnificent mare, Chinamoon. Flash is also a celebrated musician with two CDs — and counting! — to her name: Flash Silvermoon and Phases of the Silvermoon. Find out more at Flash's website <http://www.flashsilvermoon.com> or for more information, call 352-475-2432.*

# WEST IS THE ABODE OF WATER

## A MEDITATIVE RITUAL

by Wendy Thurston

Let's welcome West and explore the wisdom and power of Water

### Call the Elements

#### Air Call

Hail guardians of the East,  
Elements of Air.  
Come, join us in our sacred circle  
tonight.  
Mysterious fog—Water combined  
with Air  
Breath of us all,  
Hail and welcome. (group re-  
peats)  
(light yellow candle)  
Blessed be. (group repeats)

#### Fire Call

Hail Guardians of the South,  
Element of Fire.  
Come, join us in our sacred circle  
tonight.  
Together with Water, make the  
steam that cleanses and purifies.  
Flame inside us all,  
Hail and welcome. (Group repeats)  
(light the red candle)  
Blessed be (group repeats)

#### Water Call

Hail Guardians of the West,  
Element of Water.  
Daring and compassion.  
Gentle nymphs,  
Come to us at dusk, in the Autumn.  
Empower us with the ability to forgive and to heal.



May we taste and smell you  
deeply.

Help us celebrate friendship and  
fertility.

Blood that flows through us all,  
Hail and welcome. (Group re-  
peats)

(light candle)

Blessed be. (group repeats)

#### Earth Call

Hail, guardians of the North,  
Element of Earth.  
Come, join us in our sacred circle  
tonight.  
Carved into great canyons and ca-  
ressed by warm ocean waves.  
Earth that is our body,  
Hail and welcome. (group repeats)

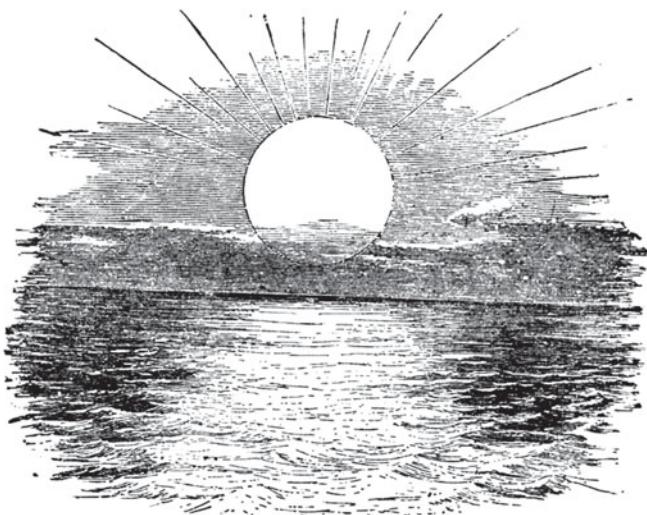
(light green candle)

Blessed be. (group repeats)

#### Spirit Call

Hail guardians of Center,  
Element of Spirit.  
Come, join us in our sacred circle tonight.  
May we always bathe intentionally in the warm cleans-  
ing Waters of Gaia.  
Spirit that unites us all with the Great Spirit,  
Hail and welcome. (group repeats)  
(light white candle)  
Blessed be. (group repeats)

## West Journey: Being of Water



(all get comfortable; sit, or lay. One person reads the following journey slowly with frequent pauses)

Close your eyes and relax.

Take a deep breath... and release it, feeling all the tension leave your body. Take another breath... release slowly and still your mind as you breath out. Take a third breath...deep, and ease your spirit as you release your breath slowly. (pause) Go to your special place in your mind. A real or imaginary place where you are completely safe and can go back to instantly. (pause)

It is time to leave your place now. Walk out into the woods. It is autumn here, near dusk... The leaves on the trees are fiery red, glowing yellow, bright orange and the pine trees are still their deep green... Walk through the woods. Some leaves have fallen, strewing the path with bright patches of color. Birds are singing their last songs before sleeping, while the crickets are beginning their choruses.

You smell the sea before you hear the waves... The air gets heavier with humidity. Walk up a small rise; on the other side are sand dunes and further away, the sea caresses the beach... The sand is warm under your feet as you move to the water. The sun is very low in the sky, almost touching the water. Wade into the warm water, let it flow around you. In the distance you see dolphins playing.

Relax, float in the water, feel it support you (pause). You notice the dolphins have moved close to you. You can almost touch them and you can hear their song in

your submerged ears. Reach out, touch the nearest to you. The skin is smooth and warm, gently take hold of the main fin. Hold on as the dolphin dives deeply under the water. Brightly colored fish swim around you, coral and plants sway with the currents.

You find yourself breathing; calmly, with no extra effort and no discomfort.

The dolphin dives deeper, further out. The water begins to get darker...and cooler. Up ahead you can see a glow. As you get closer, you see that it is an underwater temple. White pillars rise from the ocean floor, benches sit around the circular temple and a warm glow provides enough light to easily see...

Let go of the dolphin and go inside the temple. You have entered the sacred place of Water. It is the home of nymphs, undines and merpeople. Water embodies compassion... healing... forgiveness... friendship... fertility... love and dreams.

Settle yourself on a bench and think about these qualities. What do you need from Water?... What can you use in your life right now that comes from the West? (pause) What do you have to give? (pause)

Soon you feel you are not alone. Look up and see that a being has come to see you. Welcome that being... This being has something to show you...something very important to tell you...Sit in this underwater temple and listen... (pause 5-10 minutes at least)

When you are ready, thank the being and rise. Swim out through the huge pillars and find your dolphin friend waiting for you, smiling in the secret way dolphins have. Take the offered fin and let yourself be pulled through the warm waters, up to the light you see above.

The reef and the fish appear nearer the surface and you see them in a different way, now. Break the surface of the water, still holding onto your friend. The dolphin accompanies you toward the shore, then jumps out of the water and dives deep as you get to your feet in the shallows.

Only the very edge of the sun is visible over the horizon and the sky has turned incredible colors of purple, red and orange. It is hard to look away, but it is time to go. Walk over the small hill and back into the woods. Go back over the leaf strewn ground...

Enter your safe place and relax. Sit and think of what

has happened...When you are ready, come back to this place and know that the power and wisdom of the Water are yours...they always have been...

### Thank the Elements

#### Earth Thanks

Guardians of the North,

Element of Earth.

Carved and caressed by Water,

We thank you for attending our rites tonight.

Earth that is our body,

Hail and farewell. (group repeats)

(snuff green candle)

Blessed be. (group repeats)

#### Water Thanks

Guardians of the West,

Element of Water.

Daring and compassion.

Gentle nymphs,

We thank you for dusk and for Autumn.

For forgiveness and healing.

May we always drink deeply of your friendship and fertility.

Blood that flows through us all,

Hail and farewell. (group repeats)

(snuff blue candle)

Blessed be. (group repeats)

#### Fire Thanks

Guardians of the South,

Element of Fire.

We thank you for attending our rites tonight, and for your purifying steam.

Flame inside us all,

Hail and farewell. (group repeats)

(snuff red candle)

Blessed be. (group repeats)

#### Air Thanks

Guardians of the East,

Element of Air.

We thank you for attending our rites tonight, and for your mysteries.

Breath of us all,

Hail and farewell. (group repeats)

(snuff yellow candle)

Blessed be. (group repeats)

#### Spirit Thanks

Guardians of the Center,

Element of Spirit.

We thank you for attending our rites tonight, And for the sacred Waters of Mother Gaia.

Spirit that unites us all,

Hail and farewell. (group repeats)

(snuff white candle)

Blessed be. (group repeats)

#### Release Circle

(All take hands in a circle)

By the earth that is Her body,

By the waters of Her living womb,

By the fire of Her bright spirit,

And by the Air that is Her breath,

This circle is open, but never broken.

May the peace of the Lord and Lady go in our hearts,

We merry meet, merry part,

And merry meet again!

Blessed be!

*Wendy Thurston has been practicing the craft since the early 70's and has given workshops and performed rituals at many public and private events across the southeast. She is a public Pagan, High Priestess and Elder and is active with CSQ, Inc., CUUPS, International Pagan Pride Project and Pagan Wilderness Weekend. Wendy has earned a BS and MED from the University of Georgia, is a National Board Certified Agriculture Teacher, and has been listed twice in Who's Who Among America's Teachers. She lives with her cat, Josh and canine companion, Skye, and is currently looking for an agent for her novel, Forever Autumn, the first in a series about a woman who is a Pagan shape shifter. She has been published*

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# HOLY WELLS, HOLLE'S WELL

by Diane Saarinen

As the days lengthen to culminate in the longest day, Midsummer (June 21, or thereabouts), thoughts turn towards the long relationship between Midsummer and water. More specifically, we find an association with holy wells that boast magical properties at the summer solstice. For example,

*"In Yorkshire, the people of Pickering gathered at Midsummer*

*at Newton Dale Well to perform ceremonies that they believed would ensure them the blessings of the well throughout the year. In Northumberland, Bede's Well, near Jarrow, was thought to have strong curative properties, and sick children were dipped into it in the hope of a miraculous cure."* <sup>[1]</sup>

Apparently, in Britain it was advised to visit the holy wells right about sunrise on the day of summer solstice. The well was to be approached from the east, and celebrants were to walk around it sunwise thrice. Stories of old crones connected to the wells are encountered. Here is one:

*"One such well was Willie's Muir in Scotland, visited by childless women on Midsummer Eve. An old woman, the human guardian of the well, supervised them as they processed about the spring and splashed their breasts and bottoms with water".* <sup>[2]</sup>

And a longer story featuring a crone living in a well, a German fairy tale:

*"There once was a widow who had two daughters. One daughter was pretty and*



*every single day she had to sit by a well, and spin and spin and spin some more until her very fingers bled.*

*Now one day the shuttle was marked with her blood, and so she dipped it in the well to wash the blood off. But it fell from her hand and to the bottom of the well. She began to cry, and ran to her stepmother to tell her of the accident. The stepmother scolded her and told her she must get the shuttle out of the well.*

*As the beautiful daughter went to the well, she did not know exactly how to retrieve the shuttle, and so, feeling quite hopeless, she jumped in..."*



*worked hard; the other was ugly and lazy. However, the widow was more enamored with the ugly and lazy one, because that was her own daughter while the other was just her stepdaughter (Diane — a stepmother — notes: Would they quit it with the wicked stepmothers already?!)*

*The pretty daughter was forced to do the chores of the house, and*

And so the girl finds herself in a magical well. Is there a wise crone who lives on the bottom? The girl blacks out and when she wakes up, like many a Midsummer reveler, she finds herself in a lovely, flower-filled meadow, where the sun shines brightly. As she walks through the meadow, she finds many mysterious things — a baker's oven full of bread talks to her, begging her to take the loaves out (which she does), and an

apple tree tells her the apples are ripe and to shake them (which she also does). This girl is proving herself useful! And then, she encounters the crone:

*"At last, the girl comes to a little tiny house, and an old woman peeks out of it. She has large teeth which scare the girl away. However, the old woman calls out to her, 'Don't be afraid. Stay with me — if you do all the work in my house properly, you shall be the better for it. Only you must make sure to take care to make the bed well, and to shake it very thoroughly so that the feathers fly, for that is when it snows on earth. I am Mother Holle, you see.'"*

Well, the girl does exactly this, and who can blame her? Why would she want to go back to her stepmother's home where she is forced to work while her stepsister doesn't lift a finger? And so the girl decided to enter Mother Holle's service. And she stays with her until inevitably, she gets homesick even for her old home with the stepmother. She announces to Mother Holle that she must go, and Mother Holle stays true to her word. As she is leaving, she opens the door, a shower of gold falls upon her, and all the gold remains stuck to her. And the girl returns to her home, impressing them all, as she was completely covered in gold.

Of course, the lazy stepsister hears this, decides *she* wants to a shower of gold, and seeks out Mother Holle. But she is so listless about doing her chores, when it is time to go, she is covered by a shower of pitch, which remains stuck to her until the day she dies. The moral of the story: Treat Mother Holle with respect, and you shall be rewarded.

There is more folklore associated with wells than our crone that lives at the bottom — for example: "In France and Germany, young girls believed that if they looked into a holy well at midnight on Midsummer night, they would see reflected the face of the man they were to marry."<sup>[3]</sup>



*Photo taken by Lisé Quinn on June 21st, 2000*

This is a picture of the well at Donaueschingen in Bavaria. It is the source of the Danube river. The statue is of Mother Baar (The Bavarian Alps) sending her daughter Donau (Danube) out into the world. The river travels 1771 miles to the Black Sea and travels through 10 countries. It is the second longest river in Europe after the Volga.

But there is an interesting side note about Mother Holle, which ties in the idea of the well being a womb of sorts:

*"Holle was a being from the other world, and her nature was perceived as ambivalent, both friendly and punishing. In her underworld empire down below, she received the souls of the dead and released the souls of the newborn. Around 1000 CE, Bishop Burchard of Worms identified Frau Holle with the Latin goddess of the forest and the hunt, Diana."*<sup>[4]</sup>

Happy Midsummer!

#### References:

1. Matthews, John. *The Summer Solstice: Celebrating the Journey of the Sun from May Day to Harvest*, Quest Books, 2002, p. 87.
2. Franklin, Anna. *Midsummer: Magical Celebrations of the Summer Solstice*, Llewellyn Publications, 2002, p. 21.

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# The Wise Woman's Garden

by Julie Charette Nunn

*This column is dedicated to the loving spirit of Marione Thompson-Helland who said to me, “Yes, you can.”*

## Shamanic Herbalism IV

### Healing with Nourishment

For most of my adult life I moved around exploring this place and that. It was a wonderful journey. Through the life of an adventurer, I learned to live with the earth, to find the sacred in the place I planted myself for the time being. Well, just over two years ago I moved to a little farm in the Maxwelton Valley on Whidbey Island. This last year we built a beautiful, fenced-in garden that offered us organic vegetable and healing herbs. I plan to grow old with this garden. I am now becoming a permanent planting. This was a dream, so long ago, to find a place from which to grow and change and see peace. I am here now.

I actually arrived here long before buying this farm. About 13 years ago I decided to take a yoga class. What I discovered about yoga was that it brought me right into my body. Breath, movement and simple poses. I discovered I liked being in my body. Though challenging at times, I felt peace and comfort in just being. Around this same time, I met Susun Weed. I was just about a vegan, drinking soy beverage and thinking I had to give up cheese. I loved cheese and actually thought it was harming me. Susun Weed spoke at the Women of Wisdom conference about menopause. She leapt around on the stage and grabbed her breasts and then sang the song of the wise woman. She said, “How could it be harmful for women to eat milk and eggs, we are milk and eggs!” That changed my life. I went to an amazing Green Witch intensive at Hollyhock in Canada soon after that to study for a week with Susun. She talked more about the benefits of milk and calcium from milk among other wise notions of healing with nourishment. I learned that what my mother and grandmother taught me about food was right. I moved back into my body and began to grow a permanent garden there.

Nourishment is at the center of the Wise Woman

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Shamanic Tradition. It is the love of the mother and grandmother and it is invisible. What I saw back in those days of trying to annihilate parts of myself I didn't like was a tradition of self-hating, punishing and forcing change.

I didn't really know much about what I didn't like; I just had symptoms that bothered me and was told by therapists and alternative practitioners that if I lived a certain lifestyle and “behaved,” I wouldn't have these symptoms anymore. When I suggested to one therapist that I could just feel the sadness or anger that was within me, he said, “No, don't do that, that is harming yourself” I see now he was a mirror, an ally for me in my internal quest toward loving myself fully.

*Now is a good time to begin to nourish. The world needs our nourishing hands, hearts and wombs. How shall we begin? Come along with me as we embark on this journey to our wholeness.*

### Five Tasks ~ Learning to Nourish

*Inclusion.* The first task in learning to nourish is to include all of ourselves in our life. This involves remembering who we are. Close your eyes and feel into your body. Notice a place where you feel sensations, a pain or a pleasure, either one will do. Breathe into that place and notice sensations and what thoughts and feelings arise. Just notice. Breathe at least seven breaths into this place and when this is complete, give thanks for this part of you. You may wish to write or draw about this experience.

*Nourishment is invisible.* Venture into the woods, around on the land, or out in your yard; somewhere you can be for a period of time without interruption. Explore the nature of being invisible, not separate but part of it, just like a tree or leaf. How will you move, breathe, will you make sounds, how will you listen, what will you



Comfrey

see?.....do this for about 20 minutes.

*Eating whole food.* Ask yourself... How much *whole food* am I eating? Whole food is food without ingredients: organic and wild meats, raw milk, healthy fat, whole grains, locally grown vegetables and wild plants and weeds. How much time do I spend in my kitchen cooking for myself and my family? Where does my food come from? How do I prepare my food? How do I offer gratitude for the animals, plants and minerals in my food?

*Nourishing Herbs.* As you proceed with this study of shamanic herbalism, bringing the nourishing herbs into your daily life is very important. These plants are food-like herbs. They contain lots of minerals and their offerings are subtle and effective. It is through drinking nourishing herbal infusions that I found the path to the wise woman. Stinging Nettle was my gatekeeper. I was a stressed-out school teacher. I began to bring Stinging Nettle infusion to school with me. I look back now and see that she helped make the voice of the plants audible. There are three nourishing herbs that I drink often: Stinging Nettle, Oatstraw and Rose Hips. Another few that I drink occasionally: Hawthorne Flower, Comfrey, Dandelion Root and Red Clover. Make yourself a nourishing herbal infusion of one of these using one ounce of plant per quart of boiling water. Let this sit over night. Strain this and drink hot or cold. Use only one plant at a time. This encourages intimacy with the plant. Perhaps just choose one or two of these plants to really get to know. Take note of the subtle differences in your health as you experiment with these herbs.

*Make a nourishing herbal vinegar from plants in your garden.*

We did this earlier in the second installment with roots. We can now do it again when the plants are fully potent above the ground. Ask one of the plants in your garden to help you nourish yourself. Making nourishing herbal vinegar is a great way to initiate this relationship. Venture outside to your garden or yard. Find a plant with which you have really connected. Dandelion or chickweed are common around the area where I live. If you are doing this in the height of the growing season, your choices are endless...lavender, sage, rosemary, thyme, lemon balm, lamb



Hawthorne



Red clover

quarters...what do you feel drawn to craft into vinegar? Your tools will be scissors, a basket, a small jar and lid (a half pint jar is best for a first undertaking), labels and pen and your intention. Ask permission of the plant you wish to harvest. Wait for an answer. Sing a little song as you go, if you like, and tell the

plant what you intend to do with this vinegar. Gather the plant in your basket and then cut the plant up as small as possible. Fill the jar, lightly packed, about 3/4 of the way full with the plant. Fill the jar again to the top with apple cider vinegar. Put the lid on and label it with name, botanical name, date and anything else, perhaps your intention or an inspiration you had when you were gathering her. Let this preparation sit for six weeks on a little plate in your kitchen, away from bright sunlight. Shake it up and down every day. And notice when the vinegar soaks into the plant and more vinegar is needed to fill the jar. When six weeks comes around, strain this nourishing brew through a cloth and a sieve and fill a beautiful bottle with it. Take the time to cook some greens, cook them almost an hour and serve them in a beautiful bowl. Pour your healing vinegar brew over them and give thanks again for the healing ways of the plant you gathered. Speak again your intention for creating this vinegar and eat of the earth, nourishing yourself with food crafted with your own hands.

This life, this earth that gives us nourishment mirrors for us the incredible gifts we have within us. And we are so thankful. May it be in beauty.

*Julie Charette Nunn, Crow's Daughter joyously teaches from her little farm on South Whidbey Island in Washington and around the Puget Sound area. She offers weekly and residential Shamanic Herbal Apprenticeship programs for women, monthly study groups and Herbal Wisdom Circles, Herbal Wisdom mentorship opportunities for girls and Wise*

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# SALMON AND THE SEDNA CONNECTION

by Denise Bell

As a writer and reviewer for *The Beltane Papers* I am thrilled when the contents of a book I'm reviewing intertwines so well with the theme of a particular issue. *Full Moon Feast* by Jessica Prentice follows a lunar calendar and uses the ancient and colorful names that many cultures have given the moons such as: *Moon of Making Fat, Blood Moon, Wort Moon*, and the *Moon of Long Nights*. Each chapter looks at why and how each moon received its name. Time and again these intriguing descriptions relate to food. As pagans we loudly, and sometimes boisterously, proclaim our deep connection to the earth but how many of us are devoted to eating seasonally or shopping at farmer's markets?

With many friends who are farmers, I am more aware than ever of my appreciation for the food I grow and the food I purchase directly from the hands (grubby-with-dirt-under-the-nails-hands) that plant, tend, and harvest each heirloom tomato, baby eggplant, basil, and leek, or that feed and hand milk the goat whose milk I prefer to store-bought.

Ms. Prentice, who is a chef, food activist, and former Education Director of the Ferry Plaza Farmer's Market in San Francisco, understands and lives by the emotional, spiritual, and physical connections to food grown organically and sustainably. She tells us in the chapter titled "Sap Moon" about the history of refined sugar and the toll it has taken on our bodies since we turned away from more natural sugars. Have you ever wondered why so many people are lactose intolerant these days? Turn to the chapter "Milk Moon" and learn why and what you can do about it.

For this issue we choose to celebrate our connection with Water and the guiding goddess Sedna. The recipe

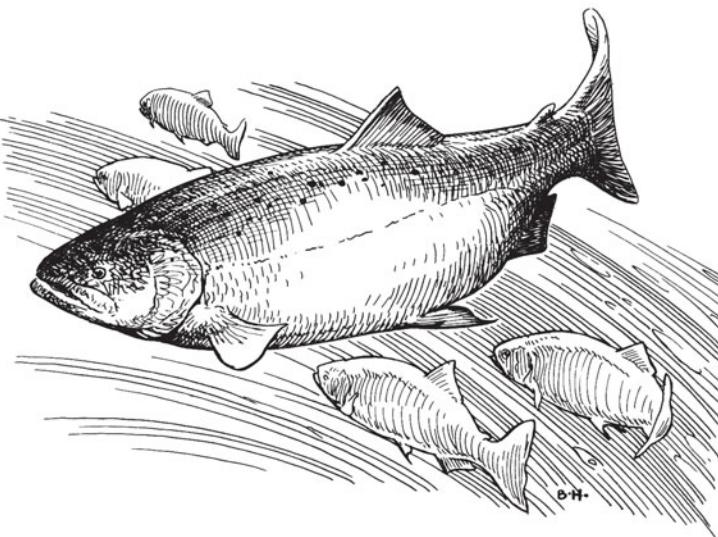
and stories below from the chapter "Moon When Salmon Return to Earth" are the perfect complement to a Sedna ritual or any evening meal.

*Salmon embody a great spirit. They represent the part of ourselves that must be free, that must leave home and have a great and dangerous adventure, but then must just as surely find a way back home—to regenerate, to multiply and create abundance, to die, and to become nourishment for another. The life cycle of the salmon is an enduring symbol of freedom and return, death and rebirth, decay and regeneration. For*

*millennia, humans and salmonids coexisted along the coastline such that both could flourish. Respected and honored by the people, the salmon made their epic journey year after year, and year after year, the seemed to offer themselves up to nourish the people who depended on them so bravely.<sup>1</sup>*

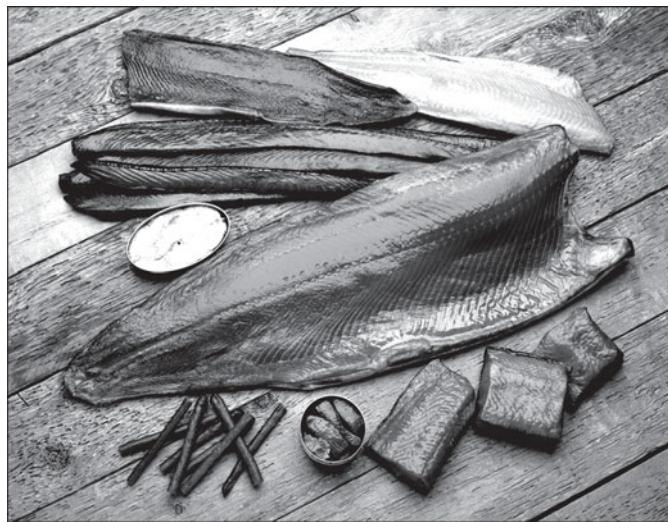
Ms. Prentice quotes a ceremony shared by indigenous people of the Pacific Northwest about the first salmon of the year in *The Gift*, a book by Lewis Hyde:

*The first fish was treated as if it were a high ranking chief making a visit from a neighboring tribe. The priest sprinkled its body with eagle down or red ochre and made a formal speech of welcome, mentioning, as far as politeness permitted, how much the tribe hoped the run would continue and be bountiful. The celebrants then sang songs that welcome an honored guest. After the ceremony the priest gave everyone present a piece of the fish to eat. Finally—and this is what makes it clearly a gift cycle—the bones of the first salmon were returned to the sea. The belief was that salmon bones placed back into the water would reassemble once they had washed out to sea; the fish would then revive, return to its home, and revert to its human form.*



...[T]he first salmon ceremony establishes a gift relationship with nature, a formal give and take that acknowledges our participation in, and dependence upon, natural increase. And where we have established such a relationship we tend to respond to nature as a part of ourselves, not as a stranger or alien available for exploitation.<sup>2</sup>

### **Salmon Poached in a Lemongrass and Coconut Milk Sauce<sup>3</sup>**



Serves 2-4

1 can coconut milk (13.5 oz)

1 lemon

1 stalk lemongrass

A few strands of saffron

1 teaspoon kuzu root powder (or arrowroot powder)

1 tablespoon fish sauce

2-4 fillets wild salmon

Salt to taste

1. Pour the coconut milk into a wide-bottomed, shallow saucepan.

2. Cut a few strands of decorative zest off the lemon using a zester. Then cut the remaining zest off in big pieces with a vegetable peeler or paring knife.

3. Cut the lemongrass in 4- to 5-inch lengths, then split these in half.

4. Add the big pieces of lemon zest, the lemongrass, and the saffron to the coconut milk and bring to a simmer over medium-low heat. Simmer, covered, over

low heat for 7 minutes.

5. Meanwhile, juice the lemon and dissolve the kuzu completely in the lemon juice.

6. Add the fish sauce to the coconut milk and simmer for another 5 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, remove the lemon peel and lemongrass from the coconut milk. 7. Rinse and pat dry the salmon fillets, then place them gently in the simmer sauce. Replace cover and cook until pale pink throughout. This should take 5 to 10 minutes, depending on the thickness of the salmon and how done you like it.

8. Transfer the salmon to plates.

9. Whisk the lemon juice-kuzu mixture into the coconut milk. It should thicken immediately. Taste the sauce and add salt to suit your palate. Turn off the heat and pour some of the sauce over each salmon fillet. Sprinkle the strands of zest on top and serve immediately.

Note: If left to sit, the sauce may separate some. Just whisk it again and it will come back together.

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#### Resources

Jessica Prentice's website is [www.wisefoodways.com](http://www.wisefoodways.com).

Full Moon Feast: Food and the Hunger for Connection, by Jessica Prentice, Chelsea Green Publishing, 2006, pp. 194, 198, 208 [www.wisefoodways.com](http://www.wisefoodways.com)

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# MYTHIC LIVING

by Kris Waldherr

This past summer was one ripe in mythic connotations for me: like Odysseus, I sailed the Mediterranean and Aegean. The circumstances of my voyage were not as dramatic as his—a cruise can hardly be compared to returning home after the Trojan War. Nor were my ears plugged with wax to resist the song of the Sirens. Nevertheless, the eternal blue of the sea drew me in, giving birth to a strange sense of timelessness. As I stared at the miles of water around me, I thought, “This is the same sea Homer described. This is the land of Athena.” The waves were never-ending in its rhythm, and wove into the drumbeat of my heart. Even after I was ashore, I felt the sea rush within me for some days afterward, as if salt water had mixed with my blood.

The sea is like that—it connects us to something deeper, something that cannot be easily rooted. It is expansive in its formlessness, yet it flows everywhere to take form.

Homer’s *Odyssey* was the first book I read that suggested the concept of mythic living to me. Within it, Homer writes of the gods and goddesses as familiarly as an old friend; the poet transforms them into accessible yet divine forces that accompany us always. One of my favorite passages tells how the goddess Athena often appeared to Odysseus disguised as a human when he most needed help. Sometimes the goddess takes on the form of Mentor, the warrior’s most trusted friend. Another time, “Athena came up to him disguised as a young shepherd of delicate and princely mien, with a good cloak folded double about her shoulders . . . Odysseus was glad when he saw her.”\* When I first read these words as a teenager, I felt comforted and reassured; we are surrounded by divine

forces, just as we are surrounded by the sea.

Though Homer wrote of Sirens and other supernatural sea creatures, Greece is not the only country to own such myths. In Germany, the golden-haired Lorelei seduced unwary sailors in revenge for an unhappy love affair. The Inuit of the Pacific Northwest often depicted Sedna, the all-powerful goddess of the sea, as a seal-like being who gained divinity after a tragic life. These stories suggest the negative transformation that can result from painful experience. Of all these, it is the poignant folktale of the Selkie which most speaks to me, suggesting the pain of being caught between worlds.



In Celtic folklore, the Selkie were seals with the ability to shapeshift into humans. Though the selkies are both male and female, most tales focus on the selkie wife and mother, suggesting the difficult choices women often face in balancing the responsibilities of family and spirit. The most famous selkie story tells of the capture of a female selkie after she had shed her skin to dance under the full moon. A fisherman witnessed her, and seduced by her beauty, stole her sealskin, thus trapping her in her human form. The fisherman married the selkie that very day. Each year on their anniversary, the selkie wife begged the fisherman to return her skin, and each year he selfishly refused. When the couple had been married ten long years, the husband decided the selkie had been a wife and mother so long that she would have no desire to return to the sea. So he gave her the sealskin when she asked for it. But the call of the sea was too strong for her to resist—with a gasp of joy, the selkie wife ran to the shore, drew the skin around her, and dove into the ocean.

...Continued on page 42



## A Divining Heart

People often ask me when it was that I first became involved with tarot. I usually just tell them how a friend of my father's gave me my first tarot deck as a Christmas present when I was a teenager. I explain that this woman was also someone I babysat for—and our two families often celebrated holidays and took vacations together. She knew me rather well, and knew that the tarot would speak to me. The deck she gave me was the *Tarot Classic* by Stuart Kaplan. I still have it today, though the box is long gone.

It is a succinct beginning. But, it does not tell half the story. Truly, my interest in tarot was born from something deeper than a simple appreciation for the imagery, symbolism, or history of the cards—something sparked between the tarot and myself upon that first encounter. The cards felt natural in my hands, and the practice of divination felt natural to my soul.

Everything has meaning to me. I notice subtleties, and respect the small things. What stands out to me is often what others find inconsequential. Perhaps it is partly why I have been following a path of divination since childhood... I have seen signs everywhere, have reflected on messages from nature, and have allowed my intuition a voice.

I am not sure where the very beginning of this path lay. I travel back in mind and memory to look for it, past the discovery of books on real Witchcraft I found while working in my local library as a teenager, past my early preteen interest in astrology, past the influence of my Italian heritage with its magic and superstition, past novels of fantasy and horror that excited and thrilled me, and past those childhood daydreams in which I entered other realms and encountered mythical creatures and people. I travel past all of the obvious outward answers, and I arrive in a murkier place, and I take a sudden breath of recognition. I see that the true beginning of this path was

indeed very early, and was rooted in a spiritual connection to the earth. And it was very much a gift from my mother.

My mother was a faithful, devout person. She went to church regularly, owned several sets of rosary beads, and encouraged my brother and me to pray and believe in God. But she also respected other cultures, and, in particular, had a love of Native American culture that she shared with me before I could understand that it was separate from our own life. Some of my earliest, most loved memories are of her reading Native American tales to me, taking me to powwows, and instilling within me a strong love of and connection to nature. With her, I sat among black-eyed susans, said goodnight to the moon, and collected wild grasses with which to decorate our home. With her, I danced in the powwow circle, and let the drumming come up from within me. These early memories are snapshots of a spiritual foundation, one that my mother gifted me with, and that I am never without.

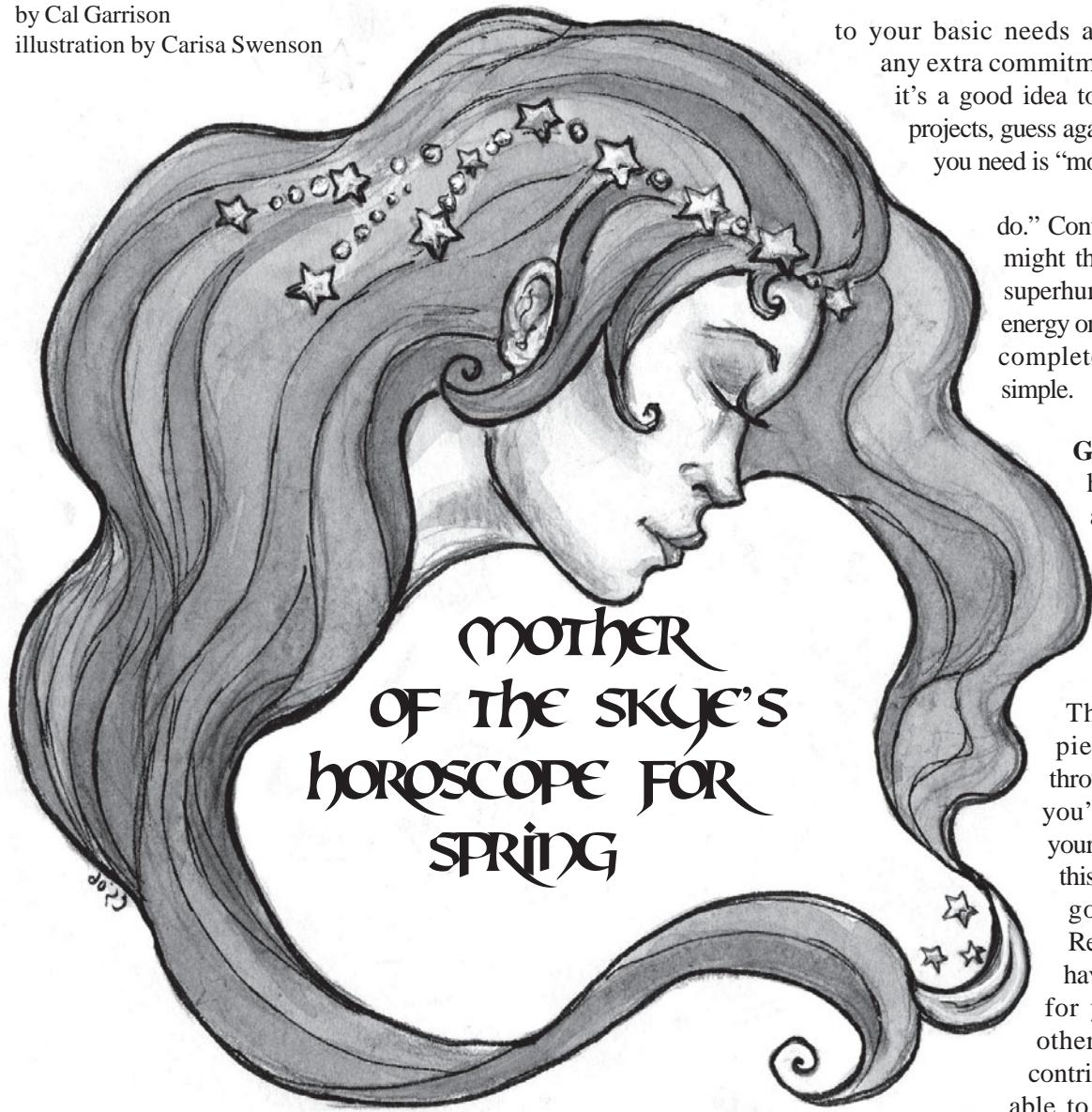
This foundation has an ancient feel to it. It is at the core of me, of who I am, and it has informed my work with divination and tarot. I feel I have a "divining heart" ... seeing and hearing messages within the small and subtle. I don't believe these messages are intentional exactly, but in noticing and reflecting upon them, insight and awareness grow, answers come to light. It is a quiet process that takes place both slowly and instantaneously. And I believe it is a process that draws upon a more primal heritage, a heritage that exists deep within each one of us.

When people ask me now, perhaps I should tell the full story, and explain how my love of tarot goes far, far back. Certainly, those first cards were given to me when I was fourteen years old or so, but the spirit that recognized them, the spirit that divines, is much older.

*Nellie Levine is a writer living in the mountains of  
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by Cal Garrison

illustration by Carisa Swenson



**ARIES:** Loss is a big deal for many of you right now. If your spiritual principles haven't gotten sidelined by the shock of what got taken away, you're able to take all of this in stride. No matter where you're at, many questions are being raised. While all of them have an answer, it will be a while before you put this in perspective. On the days when you're not overwhelmed, you'll be mellow enough to see that loss has its place in the scheme of things. Be thankful for it. If you can do that you will learn a lot from this.

**TAURUS:** You are torn between what has to be done and what you would rather be doing. Unfortunately, right now, there's no time for anything but work and sleep. This means that you need to pay strict attention

to your basic needs and not take on any extra commitments. If you think it's a good idea to begin any new projects, guess again! The last thing you need is "more to

do." Contrary to what you might think, you are not superhuman. Focus your energy on what needs to be completed and keep it simple.

**GEMINI:** You have finally found a way to balance a lot of conflicting energies and are able to keep it together better than ever before.

The relationship piece has gone through a big 180. If you're not pinching yourself, wondering if this is for real, you're gone for good. Recent awakenings have made it easier for you to see that others have a lot to contribute and you're able to take what they have to offer without feeling

compromised. If you can keep this up, the next few months will be productive and spiritually rewarding.

**CANCER:** The feeling that something needs to change isn't just your imagination. While you're aware of certain undercurrents, the bigger part of you is afraid of what might happen if you do something about this. Timing is everything and whatever needs to happen, it isn't time yet. At this point all you can do is pay attention and be truthful with yourself. Trusting your emotional responses isn't something they taught us to do in school but that's where the Truth lies. Listen to your inner heart. It's 100% accurate.

**LEO:** How you make it through the next eight months

will be different for each of you, but this is a period of trial and redemption. You've gotten so used to your burdens that it's hard for you to see how much weight you've been carrying. When you crawl out from under this pressure you'll be amazed at how much has been expected of you, and equally amazed that you made it through in one piece. In the meantime, all you can do is keep focused on the work at hand and be grateful for what the universe loans to your efforts.

**VIRGO:** You keep looking behind you thinking that somehow the past needs to be rectified. What you don't see is that the past is over. If you've moved on it's because you're needed elsewhere and your purpose is connected to what you're doing now. The residue of other people and their resentments may be affecting you at a subconscious level. If you can acknowledge this, you're just a step away from seeing that what they hold over you is their problem. Letting that go will be easier for you than it is for them.

**LIBRA:** Somebody turned on a switch that has plugged you in to the source of all your creativity. It's pretty amazing what's going on with you right now. Much of this has to do with the fact that you finally opened up to whatever you were resisting. The influx of new ideas and new ways of perceiving will continue as long as you can keep the trust factor active. If the relationship area is looking better than ever, it's because you finally chose to participate! Now that you're present and accounted for, things will take off like a rocket.

**SCORPIO:** After pulling your self out of the doldrums, your outlook is renewed. It's interesting how everything looks and feels different after a storm. With a sense of freedom that hasn't been there in a long time, you are ready for anything. If you can let go of the idea that life has limits, you will be able to connect with what you'd really like to be doing. Something big is cooking at the etheric level. When you open up to that force, the floodgates will open and your reality will rearrange itself into a whole new miracle.

**SAGITTARIUS:** Your plans have to be altered to accommodate other people and their needs. This is cramping your style and forcing you to look at how flexible you really need to be. The big question is, "how did you get your self into this?" Look back at everything that's happened in the last year and you'll see that you could have avoided it all if you didn't have so much

invested in trying to be nice. It's too late to back out. All you can do is accept this situation as one of those mistakes you'll learn a lot from.

**CAPRICORN:** This is a transitional period. So many adjustments need to be made as you step away from what's past and move into a new mode that you will probably be subject to a major identity crisis. From an objective standpoint, it's no big deal, but it doesn't feel that way at the moment. The whole question right now is, "Who are you and what do you want?" If you can find a way to answer that, it will frame your life in a whole new light. All the patterns of the past are over and done with. Letting go of them will liberate you.

**AQUARIUS:** Nobody told you this would be easy. It's a bit humorous that you would get yourself involved in such a complex state of affairs and sit there wondering why it became such a hassle! Too many lies have been told for anyone to resurrect the truth, but sooner or later it will come to light. What you're trying to avoid is being the one who speaks up first. If the truth is what sets us free, then why are you holding back? It may make a lot of waves, but you know damn well that you're the one who has to tell it.

**PISCES:** Between work and your relationship scenario, you're keeping pretty busy. It's a good thing you're working your butt off. If you weren't, you'd have nothing to do but mull over the craziness in your love life. That situation will never look the way you think it ought to so don't get too selfcritical for not having any trace of normalcy to make you feel better about things. Instead of wondering if you'll ever get it right, just accept the fact that your heart's too big for "normal." Your soul needs something out of the ordinary.

*Cal Garrison now lives in the magical community of Sedona, AZ. In her everyday life she works as an astrologer tarot card reader, does private consulting and writes on astrology, meditation and magic. She still may be reached for a while at [runewitch@hotmail.com](mailto:runewitch@hotmail.com)*



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in SageWoman, Circle Sanctuary, NewWitch, Blessed Bee and has a column in If... Journal. Visit her website at <http://www.angelfire.com/nc/gryphon> She can be contacted at gryph@pobox.com.

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<http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/grimmt/ht11.htm>

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<http://www.mainlesson.com/display.php?author=lang&book=red&story=holle>

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*Woman Teaching one to one. Her thriving small company, Crow's Daughter's Earthly Goods, is the place to purchase nourishing herbs and incredible healing salves and lotions. You can get information about all of this, read past Wise Woman's Garden columns, and register for classes on Julie's website [www.crowdsdaughter.com](http://www.crowdsdaughter.com). Contact Julie anytime 360-579-2319 or julie@crowdsdaughter.com.*

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Within the story of the selkie wife, we can infer the moralistic traces of Hans Christian Anderson's sad Little Mermaid. Forced to choose between a life on earth without a voice, or a life under the sea without a soul, she finds herself between the worlds, dissolved into mist and seafoam. (As you can tell, the original fairy tale bears little resemblance to Disney's Ariel and company.)

But women's choices aren't that simple. Nor is the sea.

Like Odysseus while he travels home from land of the gods, the sea offers us a symbolic path to follow, one rich in danger and seduction. Water, the element that makes up the sea, traditionally symbolizes the primal force of the unconscious creative. Channeled properly, the unconscious cre-

ative serves as a force for deep transformation. Or it can sweep us away with its siren call into a strange world of dangerous power and emotion.

\*The excerpt from *The Odyssey* by Homer was adapted from a translation by Samuel Butler, 1900.

Kris Waldherr is an author, illustrator and designer. Her many publications include *The Goddess Tarot*, *The Lover's Path Tarot*, *The Book of Goddesses* and *The Lover's Path: An Illustrated Novel*. *The Book of Goddesses* was recently reissued in an expanded tenth anniversary edition by Harry N. Abrams Books. Upcoming publications include *the Goddess Inspiration Oracle*, which features eighty goddesses from around the globe. Learn more about Waldherr's work at <http://www.artandwords.com/> and <http://www.kriswaldherr.com/>.

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Vermont. She has been working with TBP for six years, and has been the Divining Arts columnist since 2003. Her work has also appeared in SageWoman, New Thought Journal, and Parabola, to name a few. She invites readers to visit her online at [www.illuminationtarot.com](http://www.illuminationtarot.com) or [www.multabasia.com](http://www.multabasia.com).

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P	D	T	R	O	W	R	E	H	T	O	M	U	A	U
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# The Beltane Review

Pagan • Spiritual • Feminist

# **"I am a Renegade, an Outlaw, a Pagan" Author, Poet and Activist Alice Walker in Her Own Words**

*This interview was broadcast on Democracy Now! (<http://www.democracynow.org/index.pl>) on February 13th, 2006 and is reprinted here with permission. Democracy Now! is a national, daily, independent, award-winning news program airing on over 500 stations in North America. Pioneering the largest public media collaboration in the U.S., Democracy Now! is broadcast on Pacifica, community, and National Public Radio stations, public access cable television stations, satellite television (on Free Speech TV, channel 9415 of the DISH Network), shortwave radio and the internet.*

*Amy Goodman is the host and executive producer of Democracy Now! She is co-author of the national best-seller The Exception to the Rulers: Exposing Oily Politicians, War Profiteers, and the Media that Love Them written with her brother David Goodman. The book was chosen by independent bookstores as the #1 political title of the 2004 election season. The book was also chosen as one of the top 50 nonfiction books of 2004 by the editors of Publishers Weekly.*

**AMY GOODMAN:** This is an excerpt of my on-stage interview with Alice Walker.

**AMY GOODMAN:** I was just saying to Alice that I think one of the last times that I saw her was right before the invasion. It was International Women's Day, March 8, 2003. She was standing in front of the White House with Maxine Hong Kingston, Terry Tempest Williams, and a number of other women. It wasn't a large group, about 15 or so women, and they stood there, arms locked, and the police told them to move, and they said no. And they all got arrested. We were trying to get their message out on community radio. I was interviewing them on cell phone. The police didn't appreciate that. So, really, the last time that I saw her was in the prison cell with her. But, Alice, you said that day, as we were in the paddy wagon or in the police wagon, that it was the happiest day of your life. Why?

**ALICE WALKER:** Well, you were there. I have so much admiration for this woman and so much love for Amy. She is so incredibly wonderful, and she is doing such good work in the world. And I feel so proud of her. So I was very happy that she had appeared to talk to us about why we were there. Nobody else was asking. And so, there we were, arrested in this patrol thing,

and actually I did feel incredibly happy, because what happens when you want to express your outrage, your sorrow, your grief — grief is basically where we are now, just bone-chilling grief — when you're able to gather your own forces and deal with your own fears the night before, and you arrive, you show up, and you put yourself there, and you know that you're just a little person — you know, you're just a little person — and there's this huge machine that's going relentlessly pretty much all over the world, and then you gather with all of the other people who, you know, are just as small as you are, but you're together, and you actually do what you have set out to do, which is to express total disgust, disagreement, disappointment about the war in Iraq, about the possibility of it starting up again, all of these children, many of them under the age of 15, about to be just terrorized, brutalized, and killed — so many of them — so, to be able to make any kind of gesture that means that the people who are about to be harmed will know that we are saying we don't agree, just the ability to do that made me so joyful. I was completely happy. And I think that we could learn to live in that place of full self-expression against disaster and self-possession and happiness.

**AMY GOODMAN:** You have had a continued relationship with the police officer who put handcuffs on you.

**ALICE WALKER:** Yes, because he really didn't want to do it. And I could see that they really did not want to arrest us. And he, this African American man, truly did not want to arrest me. And I totally understand that. Would you want to arrest me? No. No, no. You would not. So even as they were handcuffing me, they were sort of apologizing like, oh, you know — because I also thought that you put the handcuffs like that, you know, your hands in front, but they put them behind you. I hadn't really noticed that before. And so, there was some amount of apology.

And then later, after we were released, you know, they take your shoes, so he was — I was there trying to put my shoes back on, and he came over and he got down on his knees, and he said, "Let me help you." And I said, "Sure." And I put my foot out, and he helped me with my shoes, and we started talking about his children. Well, first of all, he told me about his wife. He said, "You know, when I told my wife that I had arrested you, she was not thrilled." And so, then I asked him about his family, and he told me about his children, and I told him I write children's books. And so he said, "Oh, you do? Because, you know, there's nothing to read. The children are all watching television." I said, "That's true." So it ended up with me sending books to them and feeling that this is a very good way to be with the police.

And can I just extrapolate a little bit on the police and us? Because I realized fairly recently — I went to Houston to the Astrodome to take books and other things to the people, and the police, a lot of them also African Americans, but, you know, many other kinds of people, as well, they came over. And it was very clear that they, like the people who had lost their homes, really wanted some books. But they felt like they, as one of them said to me, "I really would like a book, but I'm not the people. I'm the police." And I said to him, and then some of the people said that, too, they said, "You know, these people are the police, they're not the people."

However, I said to the people and to the police that the police are the people, and we have to remember that the police are the people as well as the people. And so, you know, there they were, these big guys who probably had not had anybody offer them a book to read in years, if ever. They had gone into the army and into the police force because they did not have an education. That's part of why they're police. And so, I really feel very strongly that as we go into this activity, more of it, which we will undoubtedly have to do, that we remember even when the police are acting really, as we used to say down South, ugly, that we remember that they are also the people and that this is — you know, that we understand how they got to be the way that they are, and to try to hold that place of seeing them as the people, no matter what is happening.

**AMY GOODMAN:** I was reading Evelyn White's biography of you, called *Alice Walker: A Life*, and she goes back to 1967, and you had just come to New York, and you were submitting an essay to *American Scholar*. It was 1967, so you were about,

what, 23 years old. And it was entitled "The Civil Rights Movement: What Good Was It?" And you include it in your book *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*. You wrote it in one sitting. You won first prize. It was published. "The Civil Rights Movement: What Good Was It?" Can you talk about the Civil Rights Movement to the antiwar movement? The antiwar movement, what good is it?

**ALICE WALKER:** Well, as I was saying about the Civil Rights Movement is that sometimes you can't see tangible results. You cannot see the changes that you're dreaming about, because they're internal. And a lot of it has to do with the ability to express yourself, your own individual dream and your own individual road in life. And so, we may never stop war. We may never stop war, and it isn't likely that we will, actually. But what we're doing as we try to stop war externally, what we're trying to do is stop it in ourselves. That's where war has to end. And until we can control our own violence, our own anger, our own hostility, our own meanness, our own greed, it's going to be so, so, so hard to do anything out there. So I think of any movement for peace and justice as something that is about stabilizing our inner spirit so that we can go on and bring into the world a vision that is much more humane than the one that we have dominant today.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Speaking about movements, Rosa Parks just died. It was the 50th anniversary, December 1st, of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. The corporate media, in describing Rosa Parks, talked about her as a tired seamstress who sat down on that bus, and when the white bus driver said, "Get up," she simply refused. She was tired. She was no troublemaker. But Rosa Parks, of course, was a troublemaker. Can you talk about the importance of movements and what it means to be an activist, why it doesn't diminish what you do, but actually adds to Rosa's lifelong dedication? It adds to her reputation and her legacy.

**ALICE WALKER:** I was thinking about Rosa Parks, because I was in Africa when she died, and I missed everything.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Where?

**ALICE WALKER:** I was in Senegal in a little village South of Dakar. I was visiting this great African writer, Ayi Kwei Armah, who wrote a famous and wonderful book called *2,000 Seasons*, which I recommend to everyone. He's a great, great writer, but when I got back and I realized that she had died, I didn't actually feel like doing anything. I waved. I waved to her.

**ALICE WALKER:** What? And what I remembered about her was when — the last time that I had seen her, which I would like to talk about, because there was the public image, and one of the reasons that I wrote a book like *Meridian* is that I lived through that period of the Civil Rights Movement in the South, and a lot of the images were just that: they were images. But there was a lot happening behind the scenes.

So with Rosa Parks one day in Mississippi, we happened to be at the same event. I think she was being honored for, you know,

everything that she had given us, and we were at the same table, and I think that I may have offered to escort her to the restroom, and I was in there with her. And she — while she was getting herself together to go back out into the reception or whatever the thing was that we were doing, she suddenly took down her hair, and Rosa Parks had hair that came all the way down to her — you know, the lower back, and she quickly ran her fingers through it. And I was just stunned. I had no idea. She then twisted it up again, and she put it the way you've seen her, you know, always with the little bun, very neat, and I said to her, "My goodness, what's all this, Miss Rosa?" And she looked at me, and she said, "Well, you know, I'm part Choctaw, and my hair was something that my husband dearly, dearly loved about me. He loved my hair." And she said, "And so, when he died, I put it up, and I never wear it down in public." Now there's a Rosa.

So, I then, as, you know, writers are just — you know, we live by stealth, and so I immediately had this completely different image of this woman, the little, quiet seamstress, you know, sitting on the bus, even the activist who was so demure and so correct. And I thought, this woman, hallelujah, was with a man who loved her and loved her with her hair hanging down, and she loved him so much that when he died, she took that hair that he loved, and she put it up on her head, and she never let anyone else see it. Isn't that amazing?

So, to answer your question, for me to be active in the cause of the people and of the earth and just to be — is to be alive. There is no compartmentalization. It's all one thing. It's not like I just exist to go into a little room and write. People have that image of writers, that that's how we live, but it's not really accurate, not the kind of writing that I do. I know that what I write has a purpose, even if it's just for me, if I'm just trying to lead myself out of a kind of darkness. So it broadens everything, being active in the world. You see the world. It's like, you know, I'm learning to paint now, and what I realize, learning to paint, is that I'm learning to see. And activism is like that. When you are active, and you must know this so well, that the more you are active, the more you see, the more you go to see. You know, you are curious. One thing leads to another thing, and it gets deeper and deeper, too. And there's no end to it.

**AMY GOODMAN:** How do you write?

**ALICE WALKER:** What do you mean?

**AMY GOODMAN:** Well, Isabel Allende said that she starts each new book on the same day of the year. I can't remember the date. Maybe it was January 9, something like that.

**ALICE WALKER:** Mm hmm, I think it is.

**AMY GOODMAN:** What about you? What is your process? How do you focus?

**ALICE WALKER:** I start each book when it's ready and never before. And what I do is I try to find — if it's forming, you know,

and if I'm attentive to my dreams, I know that it's coming and I know that it's time to take a year or two, and in the early days the big challenge was finding the financing to do that, because, you know, for many years I was a single mother. I was, you know, lecturing and making a living that way or teaching, and so I had to think hard and plan, and some of my early journals are just pages of additions of, you know, how much this costs and how much that costs and how much is left at the end of the month and whether I can afford this and that. So that was the challenge, to find the time, because what I understand completely is that you — in order to invite any kind of guest, including creativity, you have to make room for it. You have to, have to make that room. And so when I learned that, and I learned that partly through meditation, which I have done for many years, that you can really clear yourself of so much that's extraneous to your purpose in life, so that there is room for what is important to your spirit, something that has to be given space and something that has to be given voice.

**AMY GOODMAN:** How did you start *The Color Purple*?

**ALICE WALKER:** I got a divorce. I got a divorce, because I really knew that I could not stay in my marriage and write about these wild women. And also, I left New York. And I — and it started really just because one of the characters, while I was walking through Manhattan, said through my consciousness, "You know, it's not going to work here. We are just not the kind of people who would come forth in Manhattan." So, they basically carried me through, you know, all this incredible anguish of divorce, because I, unlike many people who divorce out of hatred or anything, I actually loved my husband very much. He's a very, very good person, but I needed to write this book, and he claimed that the hills in San Francisco made him nauseous. So I came here, and I ended up in Boonville, because I needed to be in the country, and so I had enough money to work on it for maybe a year, because I got a Guggenheim grant, \$13,000, and I just headed for the hills. We rented a little cottage in an apple orchard, and I didn't know how long it would take, but it took just about a year.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Did you ever envision then the kind of impact it would have on the world? Did you think about the people you were writing it for?

**ALICE WALKER:** Oh, I thought about the people I was writing it for. The people I was writing it for are the people who are in the book. That's who I was writing it for. It never crossed my mind to really be that concerned about the people who would be reading it now, and that's still true. I mean, I'm happy that people relate to it and love it. I think it's worthy of love. But my contract was always really with the people in it and whether I could make them live in the way that they deserve to live, and it was a very high, very high experience to be able to do that, and when I wrote the last page, I burst into tears just from gratitude and love of them and of being, you know, there's a —

I don't know how many of you know the work of Jean Toomer. He's just a wonderful writer. But he talks about how in every generation, there is one person — or he puts it, the metaphor is there is one plum left on the tree, and all of the other plums are gone with the wind and so forth, and there is this one plum, and that plum with one seed, that's all you need, really, to start it all over again, and that's another reason for us to be more hopeful about life. So I really had that feeling of being this one plum with this one seed, because from what I could see, there wasn't anybody else who had the same kind of love for these particular people that I had or the capacity to be faithful to the vision of them that I held. So I felt very blessed and very chosen, in a way, you know, like my ancestors were really present with me the entire time I was writing. They never went away. They were just really there, and I have felt their caring, and I still feel it. And it means that I never feel alone. It's impossible.

**AMY GOODMAN:** For someone who hasn't read the book, for a young person who is wondering why they should bother picking up a book, let alone *The Color Purple*, what would you say it's about?

**ALICE WALKER:** Well, I was just in Molokai last week. I just got back a few days ago, and Molokai is the island that is least known among the islands, and it's because it used to be a leper colony, and there are actually lepers who still live there. And I was looking through a book about Molokai and about Kalaupapa, which is where the lepers are, and there was a photograph of this man who had leprosy, and leprosy had eaten away his nose and most of his mouth and his ears and a lot of his, you know, face, and he just had this incredibly beautiful beaming face. What was left of his face was just completely aglow. And what he said he had learned from living in this place of lepers all of his life was that the most horrible things can happen to people, and they can still be happy.

So, I feel that when you read *The Color Purple*, no matter what is happening in your life or how difficult the whole huge miasma of sorrow that seems to be grow-

ing, there's a way that you can see through the life of Celie, that if you can continue and if you can stay connected to nature and also to your highest sense of behavior toward yourself and toward other people, if you can really keep that struggle going — you may not always win it. You remember how Celie said to Harpo at some point that he should beat Sofia, that he should beat his wife, well, that was a low point, but she was still struggling to be someone who would outgrow that kind of thinking. And so, what you learn is that life can be really hard. People can abuse you, people can, you know, take advantage of you in terrible ways, but there is something in the human spirit that's actually equal to that and can actually overcome that, and that is the teaching of *The Color Purple*.

**AMY GOODMAN:** You write in *The Same River Twice: Honoring the Difficult*, "What I have kept, which the film avoided entirely, is Shug's completely unapologetic self-acceptance as outlaw, renegade, rebel and pagan." Do you see yourself that way?

**ALICE WALKER:** Oh, absolutely. Yes. Why wouldn't I be? Why wouldn't I be? I know I'm very soft spoken, but I have endeavored to live my life by my terms, and that means that I am a renegade, an outlaw, a pagan. What was the other thing?

**AMY GOODMAN:** Arebel.

**ALICE WALKER:** Arebel, oh yes. Oh yes, and there is no reason not to rebel. I learned that really early. There is no reason whatsoever. You know, I don't look at television hardly at all, although now I'm going — I'm saving it for my old age, but when I do see it and I see how relentlessly we are being programmed, and I see how defenseless our young are, I realize all over again that rebellion, any way you can manage it, is very healthy, because unless you want to be a clone of somebody that you don't even like, you know, you have to really wake up. I mean, we all do. We have to wake up. We have to refuse to be a clone.

**ALICE WALKER:** It was a great risk. It was a great risk, but I grew up in Eatonton,

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Georgia, actually not even in the town, way out in the beautiful, luckily beautiful countryside. But our entertainment was on Saturday night to, you know, bathe and get dressed and go to see a film. Now, these were all, in retrospect, really pretty awful films. They were all shooting and killing each other, you know. But that was all that we had really in the way of entertainment that wasn't the church and our own entertainments. So that's what I grew up with. And my mother who worked so hard and never left the house or left the fields, you know, she would sometimes be able to go, but after eight children, it was sometimes difficult to even move, but she enjoyed these things, these movies.

And so, the risk that I took was in a way to offer to my mother and people like my mother something that they could identify with, something that they could, you know, have some real connection to. I mean, my mother never met Tom Mix and Lash LaRue. These were all these characters that were, you know, always shooting and killing. So I thought about, you know, the segregated theater. You know, when I was growing up, we had to be up there in the balcony, and the white people were down here and, of course, the seats were better down here. So I wanted to change that to the degree that I could do so. And so that's why — that's part of the reason I wanted to make a film.

And I think — you know, I had never heard of Steven Spielberg when he appeared. I think that, for many people, that's amazing, given how famous he was, but I had no idea who he was. And that's the other thing, when you are working on your work — and I think it's really important that I talk to you about this a little bit as an elder — when you are working on your work, you really don't have to be concerned about what other people are doing. And when — you know, there's an expression, everything that rises must converge. At some point, if your work is as true as you can make it, it has its own luminosity and it inevitably brings to you and your work all the people that you need. So enter Steven Spielberg to make the film, which turned out to be a very good thing. People thought it was a terrible choice, but what I looked for in him and in other people is the willingness to listen and the willingness to grow, to learn, and he had all of that.

**AMY GOODMAN:** The questions that were raised, here you had written it, deeply out of your own experience, then having a white producer produce it and going onto Broadway, well, that's just repeated over and over. What were your thoughts of having your experience, your writing, your art, channeled through them?

**ALICE WALKER:** Well, I have fallen in love with the imagination. And if you fall in love with the imagination, you understand that it is a free spirit. It will go anywhere, and it can do anything. So your job is to find trustworthy companions and co-creators. That's really it. And if you find them — and I don't know how you — I can only go by how I feel about people. And so with the play, this young man, Scott Sanders, who is the primary producer, went to great lengths to woo me, because I was not interested in doing a musical, partly because of the suffering that had oc-

curred after making the film. There was so much incredible controversy after the film, and a lot of it excruciatingly hurtful. And even though I had ways to buffer myself and even though by nature I can continue to function and do things that I need to do, it was still very painful. So I didn't really want to go back to that.

And I understood later that that's an Aquarian thing, that we can take almost anything, but don't misunderstand us, because we feel deeply wounded by that. And I felt that anybody reading *The Color Purple* or seeing the film, actually, that they could read it and see the film and still think that I hated, actually, anybody, but hated my father, my grandfather, my brothers, my, you know, uncles, just because they were black men, and, you know, this would mean that I hated Langston Hughes or Jean Toomer or Richard Wright or, you know, Ralph Ellison or — it felt so incredibly mean. It felt very mean, it felt very small, and it was very painful.

**AMY GOODMAN:** And so how did you get through it? How did you weather this storm?

**ALICE WALKER:** Well, I came down with Lyme disease in the middle of all of this, and I experienced it actually as a spiritual transformation, even though I didn't know that was going to be the result. It was very frightening. But I came out the other end of the bashing that I had received, the physical debilitation from Lyme disease, the breakup of my relationship with a partner at the time. I came out of all of that with a renewed sense that life itself, no matter what people are slinging at you, no matter what is happening, life itself, basic life is incredibly precious and wonderful and that we are so lucky to have that, you know, that we wake up in the morning, that we hear a bird, that we — you know, just if you think about little things, they seem little, but they are so magical, you know, like eating a peach. I came through that period understanding that I am an expression of the divine, just like a peach is, just like a fish is. I have a right to be this way. And being this way, *The Color Purple* is the kind of work that comes to me. I can't apologize for that, nor can I change it, nor do I want to.

So there was this marvelous feeling, you know, that I had already been through a kind of crucifixion by critics. And that — and I understood so many things. For instance, you know, in the Gnostic gospels, they say that when Jesus was crucified, he was not really crucified, that he — in the body, that what happened was he understood that it was all rather laughable. And not to compare myself with Jesus, but I really got it. I got it that there is a point at which a certain kind of crucifixion leads to a certain kind of freedom, because you cannot be contained by other people's opinions of you. You will always, I think, after you go through this kind of thing, feel somewhat removed, as I do. You know, I basically stopped reading reviews. And it's fine. I have realized I don't need them. I really feel that if more people could pay less attention to other people's opinions of them, they would be so much happier.

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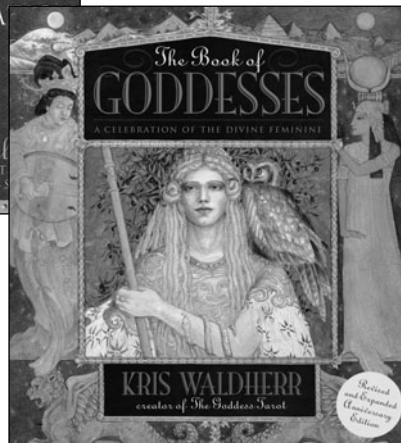
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**AMY GOODMAN:** Alice, I wanted to ask you about the Sisterhood. Who was this group of women writers in the 1970s that you gathered with?

**ALICE WALKER:** Well, the Sisterhood was the brainchild of myself and June Jordan, because we looked around one day — we were friends — and we felt that it was very important that black women writers know each other, that we understood that we were never in competition for anything, that we did not believe in ranking. We would not let the establishment put one of us ahead of the other. And so, some of us were Vertamae Grosvenor, Ntozake Shange, Toni Morrison, June Jordan, myself, and I think Audrey Ballard, who was at *Essence*, and several other women that I don't tonight remember.

The very first meeting was at June's apartment because it was the larger of — I had moved out of my marriage house into basically two small rooms. And so June had this beautiful apartment with lots of space, and the women gathered there, and I remember on the very first gathering, at the very first gathering, I had bought this huge red pot that became the gumbo pot, and I made my first gumbo and took it to this gathering of women, all so different and all so spicy and flavorful like gumbo. And we have this photo. There is a wonderful photograph that someone took of us gathered around a large photograph of Bessie Smith, because Bessie Smith best expressed our feeling of being women who were free and women who intended to stay that way.

**AMY GOODMAN:** You talked about criticism earlier and how you decided never to read reviews. Can you talk about it in terms of Toni Morrison's early work and what it meant to champion her then, and what was the response of the critics?

**ALICE WALKER:** Well, I thought that her writing was beautiful. I had read *The Bluest Eye* and, in fact, was passing it out to people. And I was very upset that it didn't get much of a long life. I think — I don't know if it went out of print, but it certainly was sort of below the surface. And then I read *Sula*, which I just fell in love with. And I remember that there was a review of it in the *New York Times* by Sarah Blackman [sic], I think, anyway, someone who basically said that in order for Toni Morrison ever to, you know, be anything in the literary world, she had to get out of this notion of writing about black women, and she had to broaden her horizons and that way, she would, you know, maybe connect. And I was just completely annoyed. And I wrote a letter to the *Times*, reminding her and them that we will never have to be other than who we are in order to be successful.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Here is the letter. Alice, here is the letter.

**ALICE WALKER:** Oh, okay. Okay, it says: "Dear sir: I am amazed on many levels by Sarah Blackburn's review of *Sula*. Is Miss Morrison to 'transcend herself?' And why should she and for what? The time has gone forever when black people felt limited by themselves. We realize that we are as ourselves unlimited and

our experiences valid. It is for the rest of the world to recognize this, if they choose."

**AMY GOODMAN:** Could you read "Be Nobody's Darling"?

**ALICE WALKER:**

Be nobody's darling;  
Be an outcast.  
Take the contradictions  
Of your life  
And wrap around  
You like a shawl,  
To parry stones  
To keep you warm.  
  
Watch the people succumb  
To madness  
With ample cheer;  
Let them look askance at you

And you askance reply.

Be an outcast;  
Be pleased to walk alone  
(Uncool)  
Or line the crowded  
River beds  
With other impetuous  
Fools.

Make a merry gathering  
On the bank  
Where thousands perished  
For brave hurt words  
They said.

But be nobody's darling;  
Be an outcast.  
Qualified to live  
Among your dead.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Alice Walker speaking



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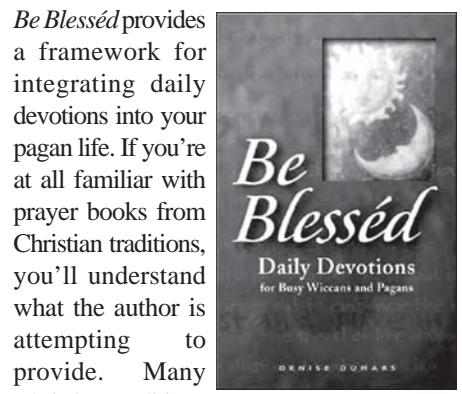
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**Be Blesséd, Daily Devotions for Busy Wiccans and Pagans**  
by Denise Dumars  
New Page Books, 2006,  
pp.224, \$12.99



*Be Blesséd* provides a framework for integrating daily devotions into your pagan life. If you're at all familiar with prayer books from Christian traditions, you'll understand what the author is attempting to provide. Many Christian traditions

have prayers for each occasion, often for each time of the day or week. Denise Dumars sets her Wiccan and Pagan devotions in a similar fashion.

Ms. Dumars does not try to give in-depth guides and invocations for each pantheon and every pagan persuasion; rather, she frames her chapters to cover a time or situation, and suggests affirmations and meditations that can be customized to an individual's needs. Her well-taken point is that all time can be sacred time, and that, as Pagans, we can feel the divine at all times. For example, the book opens with chapter "Greeting the Sun" and gives appropriate affirmations to begin the day. Also included are chi gong exercises to rev up the body as well as the spirit. Other chapters include the very well presented "Self-Esteem for Life," work, health, relationships, and dialogue with deities. Each chapter follows a similar format. Long-time practitioners of any tradition may take exception to some of the advice about talking to deities. Ms. Dumars does follow an informal format in her writing which makes this book very readable. However, not everyone will feel comfortable calling a deity "a bud." And in fairness, she doesn't advocate using that term with every deity.

I did enjoy reading this book, and I would

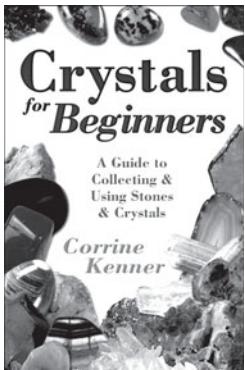
recommend it especially to someone new to paganism that came from a background where daily prayers were a part of their spiritual practice. It is a very positive book, the affirmations are very well written and it gives the reader a springboard to launch their own daily devotions.

~review by Karen Phillipi

**Crystals for Beginners**  
by Corrine Kenner  
Llewellyn Publications, 2006  
pp.248, \$12.95

Crystals are beautiful. Crystals are powerful. They seem to have an inexplicable hold over us. We can't seem to help ourselves. When we see one, we have to pick it up, turn it in the light, and feel it in our hands. They draw us to them.

Their value doesn't end with their physical beauty. Their inner beauty is truly remarkable. Have you ever noticed how with certain stones you just feel the tension rolling off when you hold them? Or how with others you seem to feel more intuitive? It's not your imagination. They have specific energies and can help with healing, divination, spellcasting, and so much more. *Crystals for Beginners* takes a deep look at the magical world of crystals, starting with how they are first created. Each crystal's own unique characteristics are explained as well as ways to use them. Keep in mind that this is an introductory book, the chapters are short and the information contained within them is quite succinct. That is not to say the book isn't useful. It is quite valuable, both as a primer on crystals and as a quick reference guide for those with more advanced knowledge. This book is a good choice for anyone who is interested in exploring the world of crystals. You will learn that sometimes a crystal's greatest gift is not how pretty it



is sitting on your shelf, but how beautifully it will complement your life.

~review by Jennifer Erwin

**Exploring the Pagan Path: Wisdom from the Elders**

edited by Kristin Madden, chapters by  
14 well-known pagans  
New Page, 2005  
316 pages, \$15.99

Is the community crying out for another Pagan 101 book? Some publishers evidently think that newbies are an endlessly spending market. (Which may be true.) *Exploring the Pagan Path*, with its gorgeous cover

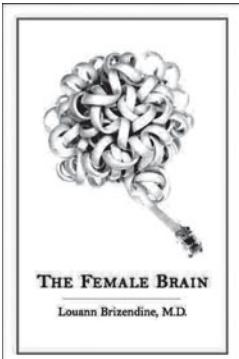
showing a path through the forest, is a good example of Pagan 101 with additional emphasis on Wicca 101 and Druidry 101, plus appendixes—"speaking Pagan," a survey of traditions and groups, several "top 10" lists, and the customary list of resources. Although some chapters—like "Finding Your Path" and "Magical Manifestation of Energy Work" (which provides the obligatory tables of correspondences)—would be as current in 1986 as they are in 2006, other chapters are definitely worth reading, especially "Methodology of Study," which speaks of logic and common sense in history and present day Wicca. Other chapters address crafting ritual tools and rituals, working with a group or being solitary, coming out of the broom closet, and the roles of social responsibility and politics in pagan lives. Altogether, the book is genial and newbie-friendly. If you know any searchers and seekers "coming home" to paganism, buy this book and give it to them.

A note on the back cover informs us that the authors all donated the proceeds of the book to Ardentane, a nonprofit pagan educational organization based in New Mexico. Several of the authors are also associated with Cherry Hill Seminary.

~review by Barbara Ardinger, Ph.D.

**The Female Brain**  
by Louanne Brizendine, M.D.  
Morgan Road Press, 2006  
279 pp, \$24.95  
[www.morganroadbooks.com](http://www.morganroadbooks.com)

"If I had to impart one lesson to women I learned through writing this book," writes Louanne Brizendine, a neuropsychiatrist at the University of California, San Francisco, "it would be that understanding our innate biology empowers us to better plan our future. ... Our modern challenge is to help society better support our natural female abilities and needs. ... Assuming the male norm...means undervaluing the powerful, sex-specific strengths and talents of the female brain. Until now, women have had to do most of the cultural and linguistic accommodating in the work world. We have been fighting to adapt to a man's world...." (pp. 159-61). Behaviors we have long believed to arise from culture, society, and/or the influences of psychoanalytic theory and mass media are really the result of the hormones that "marinate" our brain cells. Brizendine, who founded the Women's and Teen Girls' Mood and Hormone Clinic in San Francisco, opens this book (which should be read by every woman on the planet) with a table of the phases of a woman's life, from fetal to postmenopausal. Just as the default chromosome is XX, we learn, so is the default human brain female. Brain cells are XX until the eighth week, when a "huge testosterone surge" kills off cells in the embryonic brain's communication centers, grows more cells in the sex and aggression centers, and turns the brain into a male brain. All our lives, our brains are awash in varying levels of estrogen, progesterone, oxytocin, and other hormones. It's hormones washing through and soaking our brain cells that make us verbal, playful little girls, that make us desperate about our sexual attractiveness when we're teens, that drive us to find the right mate and the best career, that narrow our focus during pregnancy and



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*Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender.* ~ Alice Walker

motherhood on the survival of our children, and that—when we reach menopause—finally let us begin to focus on taking care of ourselves instead of everyone else. As we read *The Female Brain*, we will find ourselves saying, “Oh, that’s why all I did was giggle at boys and stand in front of the mirror when I was 15,” or, “That’s why my mother did such-and-such,” or “Yeah, now it’s my turn.”

Since the Stone Age, as we know, the default human being has been male. The male brain was the universal model. Less than a century ago, we learned that the “fight or flight” reaction to a threat is the “natural human” reaction. Men, whose brains are pickled in testosterone, fight or run away. But now we’re learning that women, whose brains are bathed in estrogen and oxytocin, “are more likely to come to one another’s aid in a threatening or stressful situation.” Our reaction is “tend and befriend.” That’s how, since the Stone Age, we have protected ourselves and our children. “Tending involves nurturant activities that promote safety and reduce distress for the self and offspring,” Brizendine writes, and “befriending is the creation and maintenance of social networks...” (p. 42). The female brain, she adds, “marches to the beat of

estrogen’s drum.”

The male brain marches to testosterone’s pounding tympani. The male amygdala, for example, has numerous testosterone receptors. These make it easy to push a man’s anger, aggression, and control buttons. Which makes one wonder if it would be possible to devise some wondrous elixir that could be added to the drinking water supply of the planet to reduce the level of testosterone in all males to about 25 percent. This would keep testosterone high enough to keep things interesting, but it would also reduce the testosterone pickling of the brains of politicians, generals, and religious and business leaders. The world would be a much better place.

We already know about the differences in hormones that apply to sex. The sex-related centers in male brains are twice as big as in female brains. Eighty-five percent of males twenty to thirty years old think about sex every fifty-two seconds, whereas women think about it once a day (two or three times during our fertile weeks). Give a woman a shot of testosterone and she become more aggressively sexual (among other reactions). One note of caution: as Brizendine tells the stories of her patients, she often says that she prescribes estrogen and Zoloft to troubled girls and women. As other scientific studies have shown (and which she discusses), there may be other ways to deal with anger, depression, and out-of-control emotions.

~review by Barbara Ardinger, Ph.D

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**Fools Rush In**  
by Sunny Frazier  
Wolfmont Publishing, 2006  
pp. 237, \$11.95

For many readers, including myself, astrology is a mystery. In *Fools Rush In*, author Sunny Frazier takes that fact literally, writing a rollicking good mystery where astrology helps solve the crime and catch the bad guys.

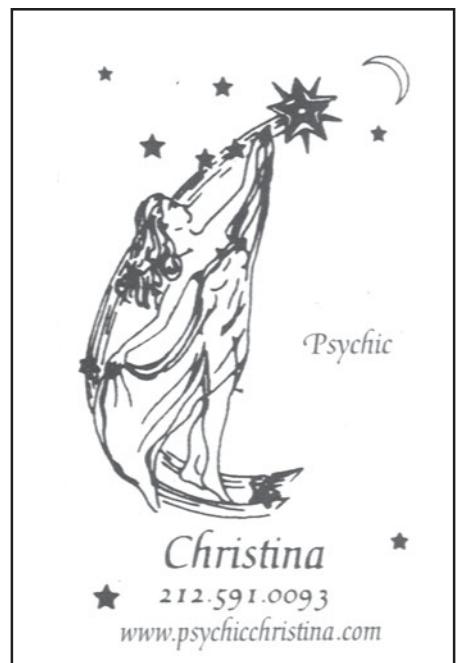
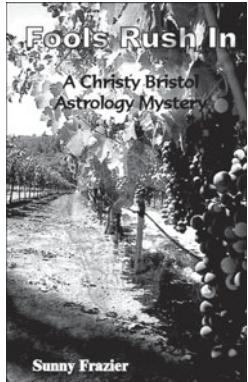
Narcotics snitch Johnny Blue is dead, murdered by an overdose of heroin administered by meth dealer Lloyd Parr’s

gang of thugs. Blue’s handler, undercover detective James Wolfe, turns to his ex-girlfriend, Christy Bristol, to help him nab Parr. Bristol is an expert astrologer; Parr, a firm believer in astrology.

A reluctant Bristol casts Parr’s chart and helps deliver it to his rural Central County, California, hideout. But things go terribly wrong; Bristol is kidnapped and held hostage by a desperate Parr, who forces her to cast charts predicting turn of events over the upcoming months, certain she can help him elude capture.

What follows is a tale of murder, meth, and madness. Christy Bristol is a strong, likeable protagonist whose keen wits are as vital to her survival as her knowledge of astrology; Lloyd Parr, a desperate, drug-addicted criminal who, despite his evil ways, I could not help but feel sorry for. This is what makes for good fiction—a protagonist the reader can admire, and an antagonist whose vulnerable side somehow makes him more human.

Frazier has been an astrologer for 35 years; her expertise comes through clearly in Christy’s charts. Readers do not need to



have a working knowledge of astrology to understand how the ancient science is being utilized to save Christy and, ultimately, bring Parr to justice.

Frazier is not, as yet, an Agatha Christie or P.D. James. But if *Fools Rush In* is any indication of what is to come, mystery lovers definitely should put her on their Authors to Watch list.

~review by Smoky Trudeau

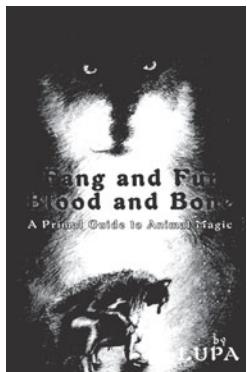
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**Fang, Fur, Blood and Bone**  
by Lupa  
**Immanion Press, 2006**  
pp 224, \$21.99  
<http://www.immanion-press.com/>

*Fang, Fur, Blood, and Bone* just howls for more quality experimental magic. From upstart UK publisher Immanion Press, this first-time offering by Seattle-based author Lupa sets a tone for the future of magical practice. Her composition of research, skepticism, and practical anecdotes give readers a rarely-offered 21st century look at magic at its dirtiest and most real.

This is not a tome for the armchair, nor is it some ethical argument to have behind the safety of a computer screen. Thoughtful, intelligent, and based on real experience, this book delivers a controversial and necessary addition to occult literature.

Cultural assimilation, a guaranteed issue with any book on shamanism written by a non-tribal member, is confronted and discussed quite well. Lupa's proffered argument for the loose cultural approach of neopaganism gives a foundation for her practice that doesn't need sundry claims of authenticity. What Lupa writes about, she really practices. Her expertise is evident in the realism of her examples, particularly where she relates her successes and failures. There are few if any back shot



references to what the Indians of the Yada Yada tribe did giving all readers relief from this abused method of building authority. Instead, she confesses her errors in a way so realistic that you know she practices what she writes.

Contention with this book is minimal. There are spots that escaped proofreading, but it still excels proofing and copy practices elsewhere in the occult publishing industry. One chapter on therianthropy\* would read better if moved to the end of the book, where it would make a nice setup for Lupa's next book on Otherkin and therianthropy. There are areas, particularly regarding familiars, where more information would be helpful, such as methods for diagnosing whether an animal is a familiar or not. Methods for building discipline while in trance would also make the book more usable to other practitioners. Certainly, plenty of information on the how-tos of these mystical techniques are on the Internet, but readers look to books for expertise and for the techniques that really work. Lupa clearly has this expertise, and it's acceptable to share methods for the absolute basic ground skills of magical practice.

What makes this book outstanding beyond its focus on genuine practice is Lupa's head-on confrontation of the controversies that are part of her practice. She talks about animal sacrifice, and intelligently contrasts the way animals are handled in meat processing industries versus religious slaughter. She also delves into her own practices of ritual sacrifice, and her interactions with deities as a result. I was particularly moved by her interactions with Bast and Anubis.

FFBB is not a beginner's book, it's a practitioner's book, and it comes as a welcome relief from other books in the occult field. Lupa makes no apologies for her practices, she assumes a specific stance, and she sticks to it. FFBB is groundbreaking, intelligent, and gives its reader concepts that work.

~review by Diana Rajchel

\*Therianthropy is derived from the noun *therianthrope*, meaning *part man and part beast*.

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**How to Use Tarot Spreads**  
by Sylvia Abraham  
Llewellyn Worldwide, 2005  
pp. 272, \$5.99

Amazon.com lists more than 13,000 books on how to read tarot; Llewellyn Worldwide, publisher of *How to Use Tarot Spreads*, has more than 50 titles on the subject. With so many choices available, what makes Sylvia Abraham's book special? It's a question I was still asking myself after reading the book—for the second time.

*Realistic, Spiritual, Erotic*

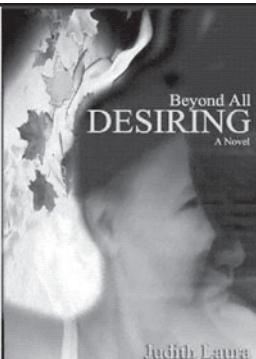
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\$15.95 isbn159526017X Llumina Press 6"x9" Paper 198 pages

Distributed by Ingram and Baker & Taylor

Judith Laura is also author of *Goddess Spirituality for the 21st Century*

Abraham divides the books into nine chapters, seven of which deal with specific issues: Love and Romance, Home and Family, High Finances, Life's Big Decisions, On the Move, Seeking Self-Knowledge, Spiritual Seekers, and a Just For Fun chapter thrown in at the end. Each chapter shows several spreads the reader may use to answer questions on these issues.

This is where the book fails to distinguish itself from others of its ilk. Abraham poses questions, spreads the cards, and interprets them for the reader, just as she would if the reader were sitting across from her at a table. The problem is, the reader *isn't* sitting across from her, nor has the reader pulled the cards, rendering the interpretations meaningless.

Examples, of course, abound in tarot books. It's one of the ways beginners learn to read the cards, no different from learning to do algebraic equations by following the examples in a textbook. But with so many books on tarot available, Abraham needed to come up with either unique interpretations of the cards, or, at the very least, less mundane questions than "Does my lover care for me?" and "Should I look for a new job?"

The book is not totally without charm. Abraham has created a unique method for picking lottery numbers using the tarot, which I tried for the fun of it (I didn't win, by the way; not even close.) But if you are looking for a new, fresh approach to the tarot, this isn't it.

~review by Smoky Trudeau

**Nordic Roots 3**  
by varied artists  
Northside, 2001  
U.S. \$5.00  
[www.noside.com](http://www.noside.com)



The numerous glowing reviews from well-known sources inside the cover of this CD indicate that my opinion may be an exception. However, I found that, for me personally, this eclectic mix of classic Nordic music with electronica and mixed-syncopation rhythms fell short of my expectations. While not offensive as background music while working on projects, I found the CD inoffensive at its mildest and disconcerting at the other extreme, although it does boast an occasional cheery bout.

All songs were recorded at the Nordic Roots Festival, and perhaps "roots" is the key word in that phrase. This is not a CD for one



seeking classic Nordic sound, but more for one wanting to hear new-age experimentation from artists who are still learning.

Despite the occasional charming bagpipe sequence, many portions of the CD made me think the artists were perhaps trying too hard to be unique and edgy. One track with particularly cacophonous rhythm made me think not of the fishing phrase "catch and release," but more "the one that got away"—with the rhythm flailing wildly and then slithering out of grasp, coming close to defining a pattern and then slipping away not into soothing randomness but something that seemed perpetually indefinable in either its consistency or inconsistency.

My skeptical response to this collection seemed validated by a person visiting my office who commented on the "tripped out accordion music." I too found myself musing with surprising frequency about the drawbacks of creating music while in an altered state of consciousness, and whether that had been the case for artists on this particular album.

All in all I would say that this occasionally intriguing, sometimes cacophonous collection is decent for an inexpensive background collection, but one should be aware that it is more an eclectic new age mix than something truly Nordic.

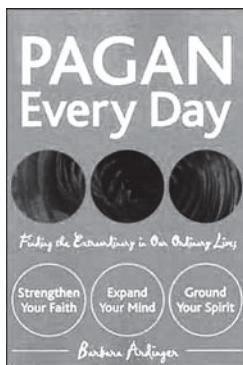
~review by OakLight

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**Pagan Every Day;  
Finding the Extraordinary in Our Ordinary Lives**  
by Barbara Ardinger, Ph.D.  
Red Wheel/Weiser, 2006  
378 pp., \$24.95  
<http://www.barbaraardinger.com>

Reviewing a book of daily readings is difficult, especially if the readings are not just quotes, jokes or one-liners. My urge to jump around and read ahead for a fuller review was thwarted as I enjoyed the subjects of each reading so much that I would end up consuming a week's worth of entries as the daily topics intrigued and guided me. Normally a reviewer will finish a book completely before writing a review. I will admit freely though—I haven't completely read this book. It is worth savoring, just as one would a box of rich Belgium chocolates. I don't intend to finish it until December 31, 2007.

*Pagan Every Day* is full of gems that will delight you. Part of the pleasure comes as the reader follows the flow of topics that wind through the book, each based on the season and an overall theme. Usually, but not always, a god or goddess accompanies the topics, which range from history, fiction, astrology, ancient myths, to personal experience. The daily readings are beautifully written and will guide the reader to a greater experience of living each day as more than just another



day in the year.

The monthly themes are:

January—Home and community  
February—Light and darkness  
March—Women and feminism  
April—Veriditas  
May—Gardening  
June—Animals and birds  
July—Water  
August—Fire  
September—Earth  
October—Air  
November—Silence  
December—Divination

The author of *Pagan Every Day* didn't include an index of goddesses or topics. In a reference book we expect, and desire, an index. I caution the reader not to jump around or try to locate a specific goddess or feast day, but to use this book as it is intended, one day at a time. In the introduction, the author explains her desire for this book to be not daily "meditations" but "conversations." When Ms. Ardinger asks questions or makes suggestions she always addresses us personally as "Reader," using the proper noun for our name and making us feel as if she is speaking directly to us. It is a warm and personal touch that I quite appreciated.

Because I'm one of those curious sorts who always wonders if their "birth day" has significance I read that entry even though it was months beyond the actual day on my calendar. I think the final line for that day is a fitting tribute for this wonderful book. "Let us make every day a *gode, godu, got, góð, gode, goode, godesse, goddis, goddace* day."

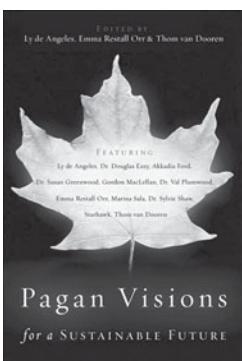
~review by Denise Bell

**Pagan Visions for a Sustainable Future**  
**Edited By Ly de Angeles, Emma Restall Orr, & Thom van Dooren**  
**Llewellyn Worldwide, 2005**  
**pp.282, \$17.95**

*Featuring essays by: Ly de Angeles, Dr. Douglas Ezzy, Akkadia Ford, Dr. Susan Greenwood, Gordon MacLellan, Dr. Val Plumwood, Emma Restall Orr, Marina Sala, Dr. Sylvie Shaw, Starhawk, Thom van Dooren*

With *Pagan Visions*, Llewellyn has published a solid book of essays written on one of the most vital topics of our generation. Sustainability is linked with architecture, farming, ranching, business and environmental issues. According to

*W i k i p e d i a*, “sustainability” is defined as “a means of configuring civilization and human activity so that society, its members and its economies are able to meet their needs and express their greatest potential in the present, while preserving biodiversity and natural ecosystems, and planning and acting for the ability to maintain these ideals in a very long term.”



*Pagan Visions* begins with an essay by Emma Restall Orr on pagan ethics. Pagan morality is based on neither a carrot nor a

stick, as in other spiritual paths, but on a simple, yet respectful, interaction between the human mind and our environment. Orr cites that religious morality tightens when the upper classes are threatened. She also asks if our environmentalist actions are defined by what is good for the world at large or if they are human-centered?

The essay titled “Magickal Ecology” has a strong explanation of the *Negative Confession of Maat* as a vision to sustain life and future. Akkadia Ford presents us with what she refers to as a “sobering realization.... As life is preserved, a paradox presents itself: to sustain human life, we each daily take life.” Whether it is the life of plants or the life of animals or that of our natural surroundings, we are interfering on a continual basis. As an example, she uses *The Negative Confession*, which was originally a funerary papyrus said by the deceased as the Triumph of Order (Maat) over Chaos (Isfet). In the *Confession*, the deceased lists negative behaviors that he/she did not participate in. This addressing of deeds not done is directly opposite of listing personal accomplishments at the pearly gates and shows focus on a greater world than the self. As it did in ancient Egypt, this process can hold great meaning for us today when conscious decisions about basic items such as food or clothing can have worldwide impact.

Marina Sala gives us the usual historical look at the relationships of gender and the evolution of religious bias. But she takes the gender debate further, explaining that social and political interactions are an endless game of reaction and retribution based on fear. She talks not just of rights of passage in ritual for women, but also of the desire by men to redefine their roles in a balanced world.

In Dr. Douglas Ezzy’s essay we read how he is connected on a deep level with what he refers to as The Mountain, which was the view from his childhood bedroom window. He tells us how The Mountain provides the water he drinks and irrigates the fields in which the food he eats is grown, and the air that he breathes which comes in cold winds down the mountainside. It is his Weather Channel, his geographical anchor and his friend. When we become removed from the natural world, we begin to imagine our food comes only from the big box on the corner and we rationalize cutting down old-growth

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forests for cheap paper to wrap the cheap hamburgers from cattle grazed in the destroyed Amazon.

A very challenging cry comes from Gordon MacLellan in his essay titled "Dancing in the Daylight." "Where are the Pagans?" he asks. For a spirituality that claims to be nature-based, most pagans have chosen seclusion based on fear instead of public activism and celebration.

There are a few places in the first essay that Orr becomes as superior-sounding as a fundamentalist in any faith stating that right-minded pagans are all vegans and home school their children. Thankfully, that is one of the few narrow views offered in this collection. Generally, this book inspires the reader to review life as a pagan and to look deeper at the impact of choices in respect to living harmoniously on our planet. Throughout the book are essays of Australian activists with a notable exception of a strong interview with an essay by Starhawk, America's most visible pagan activist. *Pagan Visions* is one of the most important pagan books of the decade.

~review by Denise Bell

**Sistren**  
by Jane LeCompte  
iUniverse, Inc., 2006  
159 pp., \$12.95  
[www.iuniverse.com](http://www.iuniverse.com),

*Sistren* is a dream-provoking novel about two sisters, one of whom has been murdered. The author tells us that the title is a plural form (like "brethren") of the word "sister," but "with mythic or ritual connotations." It may also be intended to remind us of the sacred rattle. While the plot is based on the story of the descent of Inanna (which is given at the end), this is not a clumsy point-by-point *roman de clef*, and LeCompte does not beat us over the head with correspondences. Well, yes, there are a cat named Shuba whose actions lead to rescue and recuperation and two short



people who may remind us of fingernail creatures. But there are also references to Aesop (one of the sisters says they are like the grasshopper and the ant), and the sheriff is surely related to Aidan Quinn's lawman in *Practical Magic*. It's also a murder mystery. Erika was the head of a radical conservationist group called Earthling whose *raison d'être* is to protect an old-growth forest. Who killed her? And why?

After Erika Temple's office in upstate New York is bombed, her sister Nina, a married CPA living in California, flies across the country to "pack up Erika's life." The sisters had been out of touch for many years, and as Nina comes into a house that is the antithesis of her own lifestyle and opens box after box, she learns that Erika has been studying the genealogy of the family and tracing the motherline all the way back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Nina must live for six weeks in her sister's house, where she finds a secret cellar, to do the work. What she finds manifests in disturbing dreams and visions, and she passes through the seven gates of the myth, dropping something she thought was sure and true at each one. But what happens in the throne room of Ereshkigal? What is the truth behind this family's myths?

Buy this book. Give yourself an uninterrupted evening to read it. Actually, you may want to read it two or three times in a row to catch the details you missed the first time.

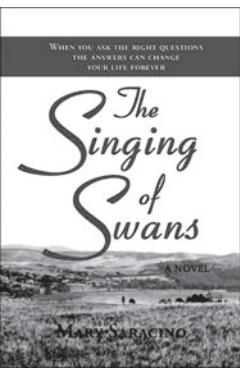
~review by Barbara Ardinger, Ph.D.

**The Singing of Swans**  
by Mary Saracino  
Pearlsong Press 2006  
343 pp., \$20.95  
[www.marysaracino.com](http://www.marysaracino.com)  
[www.pearsong.com](http://www.pearsong.com)

In the novel *The Singing of Swans* the lead character, Madelene, an overworked computer analyst, is haunted first in her dreams, then in her daily life, by an old woman in rags and a red beret. The woman,

who Maddie assumes is a bag lady, continually asks for a match and calls Maddie by another name, Ziza. Fueled by double venti lattes from Starbucks, the loss of her job, and the discovery of a secret family history, Maddie spontaneously books a flight to Palermo, Italy to follow a chthonic thread to her ancestry.

Throughout the book the author has woven stories of women who each worshiped the Black Madonna, the Dark Mother, or the Divine She. Josphina and Rosalina are priestesses of Persephone in 70 BCE, one of whom will be abducted from the temple. Next we meet Fiora and Ibla, mother and daughter healers, as one suffers a horrible mutilation because of her refusal to remain quiet about the Dea Madre, Cybele. And we read of Carmela and Ziza, mother and daughter midwives



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### **Awaken the Wise Woman!**

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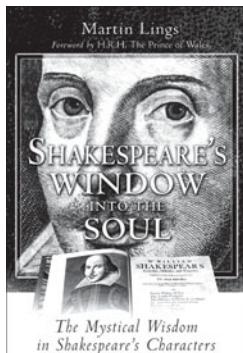
accused of murder. The ancestral tales are the richest moments in the novel. Each battles persecution for their beliefs yet remains focused on their true spiritual heritage, even if they must use the cover of Catholicism to do so.

The modern magical tale closes with a deeply emotional ending as Madelene, after meeting Julia, an American expatriate living in Italy, descends beneath the legendary Lake Pergusa into the Underworld for her own initiation in the mysteries of the Dark Mother.

~review by Denise Bell

**Shakespeare's Window into the Soul:  
The Mystical Wisdom in Shakespeare's Characters**  
by Martin Lings  
Inner Traditions, 2006 (3<sup>rd</sup>ed.)  
224 pp., \$14.95

The reader who picks up this book based on the title, expecting to get Shakespeare's take on New Age thought is going to be disappointed. The "mystical wisdom" referred to in the title is the Christian mysticism of the Middle Ages. The author's argument is that Shakespeare's writing is not just great literature, but sacred art that, especially in the later, more mature works, addresses a central theme of Christian mysticism; "the means of purifying the soul of its fallen nature and ... the fruit of that restoration of the primordial state, the soul's beatific union with God." Lings does admit that many non-Christian traditions are concerned with



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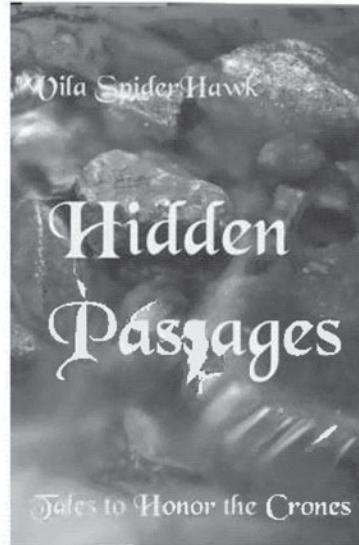
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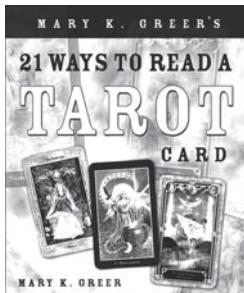
that theme as well, although they may use different terminology and approach the topic from a different perspective.

After his introductory chapters, the author goes on to examine ten of Shakespeare's plays and the use of Christian themes, symbolism and analogy in them. I admit, although I have read and taught Hamlet many times, I had never noticed the parallels between King Hamlet's death—the serpent in the garden, the killing of the favored brother, woman as the source of temptation, the disorder in the kingdom as a result of sin—with the Biblical story of the Garden of Eden, although they seem almost painfully obvious now that they've been pointed out. And then, of course, there is the redemption of the kingdom and the restoration of grace through the (sacrificial) death of young Hamlet.

This is not an easy book to read. The author is a Shakespeare scholar and assumes a working knowledge of Shakespeare's plays on the part of the reader. Quotes from the plays are used extensively to illustrate a point, and although they are referenced by act, scene and line, a great deal of the burden of placing the quote in context is placed on the reader. Readers who are unfamiliar with medieval thought and Christian mysticism will also find the reading slow going at times, since a general knowledge of those topics also seems to be assumed by the author. Still, readers who are serious students of Shakespeare, or ardent fans, and are interested in approaching his works from a new perspective may find this book a rewarding read.

~review by Jackie Gorman

**21 Ways to Read a Tarot Card**  
**by Mary K. Greer**  
**Llewellyn Publications, 2006**  
**336 pages, \$16.95**



Reading *21 Ways to Read a Tarot Card* is like taking a personal workshop from Mary Greer, who probably knows more about the history, theory, and practice of the tarot than anyone else on the planet. "Pick a card," she begins. Find a deck whose minor arcana cards have pictures on them, relax into your meditative state, shuffle the cards, and select three cards. Which appeals most to you? That's the card you'll work with. You can be a master tarot reader or a beginner, you can be reading for a querent or yourself—after you complete this course of study, you'll be able to take what you've learned and apply your knowledge to the rest of the cards in the deck. (Which is a good idea.) By the time you've finished the activities in Step 21, you'll have progressed beyond mere theory and entered the land of opportunity, ritual, and real work in your mundane life.

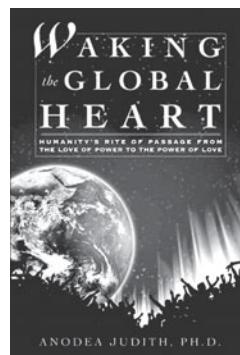
Each of the 21 steps is the subject of a chapter that includes things to actually do. You're not just sitting there and reading a book. You're getting into the tarot. Step 1: name the card. Say the name of the card out loud. Saying the name out loud establishes a connection between you and the card. Step 2: describe the card. What's in the picture? What details do you see? What do they mean to you? Step 3: what emotions do you project into the card or are suggested by the card? Step 4: tell a story about the card. Make it a myth or fairy tale, and, Greer advises, "be spontaneous, wild and a little crazy" in telling your story. Let animals and inanimate objects speak. The story doesn't have to make sense, Greer adds, because as we follow the 21 steps we're following the path of the Fool, which—yes, indeed—does not always make sense. Step 5: what is the symbolism of the card's number? (Greer presents a mini-course in numerology.) Step 6: what do the card's mode, suit, and elemental correspondences signify? After we synthesize what we've learned so far (Step 7), we step through the gate to the path of deeper knowledge. The chapters include sections titled "The Way of the Apprentice," which is the basic, introductory material, and "The Way of the Adept," in which we listen to someone who knows the theory behind what she teaches. We already know, for example, that stories have enormous power; here we also learn what that power can be and how the picture on a tarot card can have correspondences with our lives, how we may act them out in our lives. In Step 18, we imagine ourselves inside the card and Greer provides a guided visualization. We *become* a character drawn on the card, *feel* the card's archetypal energies, *speak with* or *listen to* a character on the card. Imagine hearing what the Empress or the Hanged Man might say. What would it feel like to ride in the Chariot? To fall out of the Tower or travel under the Moon? The book also includes nine appendixes and a glossary. This

may be the only book you'll really need on the tarot. All the other books are, so to speak, icing on the cake baked by Mary K. Greer.

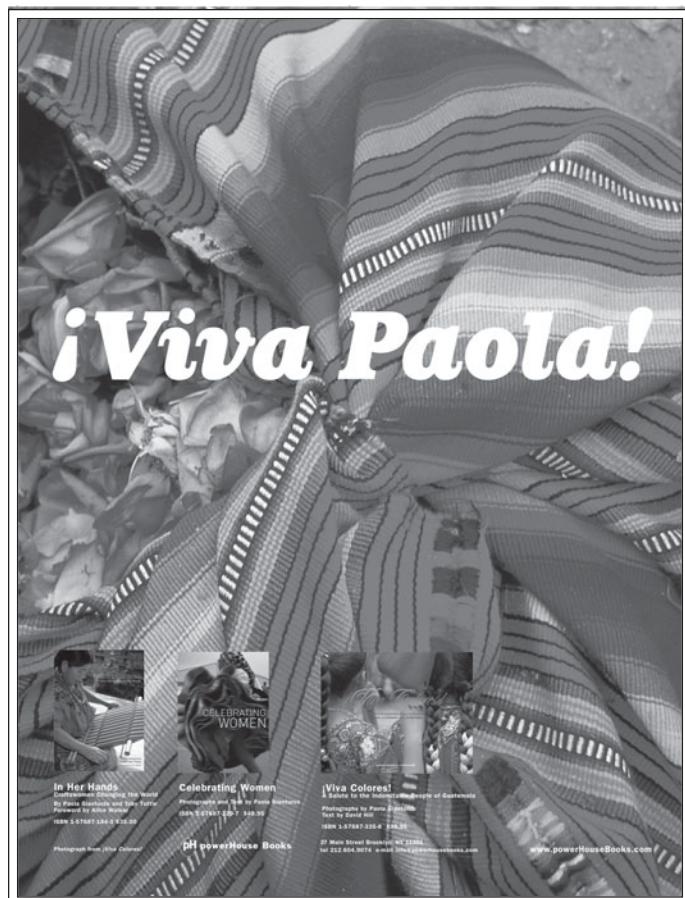
~review by Barbara Ardinger, Ph.D.

### **Waking the Global Heart: Humanity's Rite of Passage from the Love of Power to the Power of Love**

**by Anodea Judith**  
**Elite Books, 2006**  
**389 pages, \$17.95**  
[www.WakingtheGlobalHeart.com](http://www.WakingtheGlobalHeart.com),  
[www.EliteBooks.biz](http://www.EliteBooks.biz)



Psychologist, teacher, and former president of the *Church of All Worlds*, Anodea Judith, who is also probably the world's authority on the chakra system, has written a book of such passion and thought that to adequately summarize its ideas, a review might require a whole magazine. Basically, what Judith does is relate prehistory and history, with an emphasis on Western culture (because that's where we live), to the chakra system.



In the earliest times, pre-human and human beings were an integral part of nature. As we worshipped our mothers and our Mother, we were focused on birth and survival, on issues around elemental earth. These are first chakra issues. Judith characterizes the Paleolithic era as the time of the Static Feminine, when life was cyclic, stable, and unchanging. With the Neolithic, when we invented agriculture, domesticated animals, and settled in larger villages, and images of male gods started to appear beside the Great Mother, humanity moved into the second chakra, which is associated with elemental water and oriented toward emotions, sexuality, and procreation. "Rising populations," Judith writes, "created new challenges for food and land, and required a new means of social organization, including division of labor." Temple bureaucracies evolved into hierarchical centers of power and led to the rise of kings. The Bronze and Iron Ages are, "typified by the Dynamic Masculine overthrow of the Great Mother cultures, turning most previous values to their opposites. Developmentally [remember, Judith is a psychologist], it corresponds to the childhood stage of awakening will and rebelling against the mother" (p. 105). As the myth of Tiamat and Marduk shows, god and goddess were separated, masculine dominance was established, and humans were made slaves to gods and/or kings and/or high priests. We were marching into the third chakra. We were learning to exert our will, to love power.

Where are we now? We're in the age of the Static Masculine, the age of heroes and kings, of warfare and technology. The Static Masculine "holds things in place," Judith writes. It is "linear and grounded in logic. It focuses on distinctions: it divides, rules, and regulates. ... Myths and legends increasingly [clash] with the logical discourse" (p. 130). The Static Masculine is invested in the third chakra—power, intellect, and law and order. Judith compares the Roman Empire, which "lost its heart and collapsed," to world culture today. Everywhere we look, we see "oppressive government, rapacious expansion, ambitious generals, barbarian incursions (read terrorism), power struggles between church and state, sustained inflation, moral decay, and epidemic disease" (p. 156).

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Where are we now? We're also in the adolescence of humanity, and it's a geekish, power-addicted adolescence. (If the facts and statistics collected in chapter 13 don't depress and awaken a thoughtful reader, nothing will.) But "evolution is the gods' way of creating more gods," Judith writes:

*Like gods, we have the powers of both creation and destruction, now on a global scale. We can fly to the moon, influence the gene pool, render species extinct, shift the climate, or irradiate the planet with nuclear weapons. Like a cancer, we can continue to expand our population, creating wars and epidemics as a balance...*  (p. 226).

Where do we need to be? Until now, we have been "in a childlike relationship to parental gods." Now it's time to grow up. Yes, we have the power to change the world. We need to awaken the global heart. We need to leave behind the love of power and move into the heart chakra and grasp the power of love.

Thirty years ago, we were reading *The Aquarian Conspiracy* and bringing new ideas to the mainstream. Today, we should be reading *Waking the Global Heart* and bringing humanity through a new initiation into a heart-chakra culture that can refresh and save the planet we live on. *Waking the Global Heart* is, in fact, probably the best book you're going to read in this decade. We need to get our modern god-kings and queens—leaders and politicians at every level from local to international—to read it, too, so they can learn to help us move into the power of the heart chakra before it's too late.

Note: Along with the powerful, thought-provoking text, this book also gives us complex, detailed timelines by Richard Ely and

chapter illustrations by Ian Szymkowiak that are as elegant and beautifully symbolic as the art of the finest tarot deck.

~review by Barbara Ardinger, Ph.D.

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**The Witch of Cologne**  
by Tobsha Learner  
**A Forge Book, Tom Doherty Associates,**  
**2007**  
**pp.476, \$7.99**  
**[www.tor.com](http://www.tor.com)**

Just as most of the so-called witches persecuted during the Burning Times were not pagan, so is the “witch” of the title not a witch but a Jewish midwife living in Cologne (whose cathedral boasts relics from St. Ursula and the Three Magi) in 1665. The middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century is a time of extremes in Europe, with Louis XIV on the throne in France, the restored Charles II ruling in England, Leopold the Hapsburg emperor spreading his tentacles across the continent, the Turks still trying to invade Vienna, and the Netherlands waging war on England and trying to become a republic. The virulent Catholic-vs.-Protestant Thirty Years War ended only 20 years earlier, and now Germany is a maze of independent states whose intrigues would make Machiavelli applaud.

The cast of *The Witch of Cologne* is as huge and hugely complicated as the book’s historical context. At the center is Ruth bas Elazar Saul, daughter of a beautiful Spanish *converso*. (*Conversos* were Jews who converted to Christianity, but because anti-Semitism was so widespread they were still persecuted.) As a teenager living in a time and place where education is forbidden to women, Ruth disguised herself as a boy and ran away to the Netherlands, where she apprenticed herself to a physician and studied with the great philosopher,



*The WITCH  
of COLOGNE*  
TOBSHA LEARNER

Benedict Spinoza. Back in Cologne, she now lives in Deutz, the Jewish ghetto across the Rhine. Detlef von Tennen is a nobleman and canon at the cathedral. He’s also a cousin of the archbishop, who is as monstrous and devious as any target of the Reformers a century before. Carlos Vicente Solitario is a Spanish inquisitor. Because Ruth’s mother scorned him when he was her music tutor, he is now filled with immovable hatred. He charges Ruth with heresy and witchcraft, gets out the cathedral’s copy of the *Malleus Malificarum*, and begins torturing her. Alone in his monastic cell, he plays his viola de gamba and entertains sado-masochistic erotic visions.

Religio-political intrigue in 17<sup>th</sup> century Germany makes anything happening in the world today (think of the circumstances surrounding the Russian ex-spy who was poisoned by polonium) pale by comparison. Because Ruth is a secret kabbalist (both she and Solitario have invoked the demon Lilith, ghosts appear to several characters), the chapters of the book are named for the descending *sephiroth* of the kabbalistic Tree of Life. The plot gallops from climax to climax—the dunking of Ruth in freezing water and her rescue by Detlef, who has persuaded his cousin the archbishop to let him “join the questioning”; the arrival of the Black Plague and a Schülergiefel, or pogrom carried out against the Jews by university students in Cologne, in which Ruth’s father, the chief rabbi, dies; the love affair of Ruth and Detlef and Ruth’s pregnancy. Complication and intrigue build and intertwine until we come to feel that we’re in the middle of lives and plots that will never be untangled. *The Witch of Cologne* is as big and juicy a historical novel as you’re going to find in this decade. Buy it, look closely at the front and back covers, clear your calendar, and start reading. It’s nearly impossible to put down.

~review by Barbara Ardinger, Ph.D.

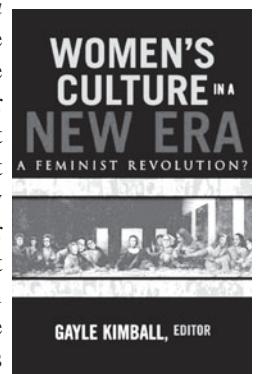
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**Women’s Culture in a New Era: A Feminist Revolution?**  
Edited by Gayle Kimball  
**The Scarecrow Press, 2005**  
**239 pp. \$35.00**  
**[www.scarecrowpress.com](http://www.scarecrowpress.com)**

*Women’s Culture in a New Era* is a book we should all be reading— younger women to find out that things haven’t always been as they are today, older women to find out what’s been happening since we finished with the 70s and got on with our lives. What do we learn? Some things change. Now we have “girlie culture,” which “embraces that [the word “girl” and anything pink] which once symbolized [our] oppression” (p. 197). Some things never change. The “-Ism Brothers” still rule the world and women still need to assert themselves and claim their share of shrinking resources.

With a cover featuring Mary Beth Edelson’s famous painting, *Some Living American Women Artists/Last Supper*, the book is a follow on to editor Gayle Kimball’s 1981 book, *Women’s Culture: The Women’s Renaissance of the Seventies*, in which she looked at “women’s approach”—yes, plural “women,” singular “approach”—to visual arts, music, literature, religion, and all female organizations. “I wanted,” Kimball writes in the preface, “to find out how the themes and goals described in the first edition have changed over the past decades. Have feminist goals become mainstream or marginalized? What do young women think about women’s issues today” (p. v).

The book is divided into five parts. In Part 1, “Visual Arts,” we read an interview with Judy Chicago, a chapter by Mary Beth Edelson, and long essays on women in film and television and women’s theater. Edelson’s essay on art and activism describes “performative creative ritual,” and we learn that much of what we do in circle today (going around, sharing feelings, etc.) was created back then. “We weren’t interested in becoming a dogma that comes to believe it is the one and only true religion,” she writes, “starting wars, crusades, and goddess knows what else. What we were proposing was . . . a participatory paradigmatic sweep that would affect our collective vision(s) for women’s rights and human liberation” (p.



31). Part 2 addresses women's music, wherein we learn the history of the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival (established in 1976 with "separate but safe space" for women). Other topics are lesbian music and today's underground women's music, and we also get to meet Bitch and Animal and read some of their lyrics. Part 3, Literature, opens with academic, dry-as-dust lit crit and moves to a thoughtful essay on women and nature, essays on their work by Marge Piercy and Robin Morgan, and a chapter on the Third Wave Girlie Culture. The foregoing covers twelve of the book's fifteen chapters. Part 4, "Religion," gets two chapters—another dry chapter on feminist theology and an interview with Z. Budapest. Anything Z. says or does is idiosyncratic and entertaining. Part 5, "Organizations," is concerned only with the feminist health movement.

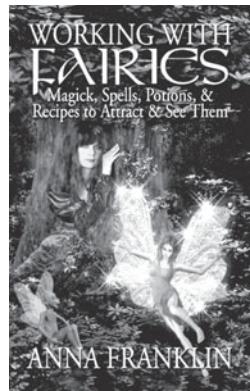
~review by Barbara Ardinger, Ph.D.

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**Working with Fairies, Magick, Spells  
Potions & Recipes to Attract and See  
Them**  
by Anna Franklin  
New Page Books, 2006  
pp.256, \$13.99

Anna Franklin's *Working with Fairies* is an overview of the Fairy Realm. This is a vast topic, and Ms. Franklin covers a lot of ground in her work. Although she resides in Britain, and provides a lot of lore from that country, she also includes a great deal about the legends and folklore from other countries around the world.

Chapters include "The Otherworld," "Techniques for Fairy Contact," "Fairy Families and Elementals," among others, and in each chapter she includes examples from historical records as well as examples from her own



experience. Throughout the book, Ms. Franklin explains that witches derive many powers from the fey, and that by working together—on the fairies' terms—one may gain knowledge and healing abilities.

My favorite part of the book was the pathworking meditations, specifically the relaxation exercise. This is not a unique feature to this book, but it was an excellent reminder of the need to let the stress of daily life go, before attempting to contact those of the Other realms. The guided meditations were interesting, and can be incorporated into any pantheon, provided you're willing to do the research to correctly contact your deity of choice. There are many cautions about working with the fairies; not all are friendly and well disposed to human contact. This is a caution raised in other works on the fey as well. You're not tinkering with Tinkerbell here. There are many herbal recipes included in this work, ranging from bath salts, incense and recipes for potions to open the third eye. Overall, this is an interesting book, and if you're new to Fairies and their lore, it's a good choice.

~review by Karen Phillipi

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## TBP Book Reviewers

**Barbara Ardinger, Ph.D.** : The author of several books including *Pagan Every Day* (RedWheel/Weiser, 2006) Her day job is freelance editing for people who don't want to embarrass themselves in print. Barbara lives in southern California.

([www.barbaraardinger.com](http://www.barbaraardinger.com))

**Lone Eagle Eye:** Sik Sika (Blackfoot) Lone Eagle Eye is retired from working with Special Education students, a job she loved very much. Ever since she was a little girl, she especially enjoyed animals of all kinds, being in nature, reading and helping others.

**Denise Bell:** Is a lavender farmer in rural Oklahoma. She is a student of Nature who believes that a day spent in the field with wind in her hair and dirt in her hands is as good a life as can be lived.

**Diane Saarinen:** The book reviewer for [www.newagejournal.com](http://www.newagejournal.com), Diane's work has also been seen in *newWitch*, *Circle*, *Living in Season*, and *Quiet Mountain: New Feminist Essays*.

**Diana Rajchel:** A consummate feminist curmudgeon and rabble-rouser, has her third degree in Wicca and takes that as license not to take herself seriously ever again. She writes full time, runs a custom perfumery and acts as the Staff Chair for Twin Cities Pagan Pride.

**Jackie Gorman:** A long-time reviewer for *The Beltane Papers*.

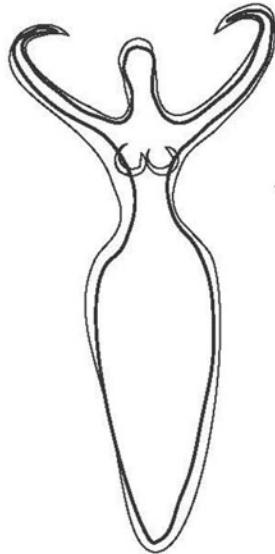
**Lady Isadora:** A Witch priestess, dancer, critically-acclaimed Pagan recording artist and writer. Award winning languages scholar, and all-around broomstick blue-stocking. Founder of *Our Lady of Spiritual Audacity* and the *Black Witch-Hat Society*, a member of the *Fellowship of Isis*, and a longtime trustee of the *Universal Federation of Pagans*.

**Karen Phillipi:** A life-long spiritual seeker who sees God/ess in all beings and continues to journey with joy. Professional career includes stints in advertising, marketing, and PR. She is currently the editor of a monthly newspaper.

**Smoky Trudeau:** A freelance writer and editor for 15 years. Her first novel *Redeeming Grace* was published in 2003 and she is currently shopping for a publisher for her second. She lives in Champaign, IL with her husband, daughter, and a plethora of animals, both wild and domestic.

**Jennifer Erwin:** A long-time reviewer for *The Beltane Papers*.

**Oaklight:** A frequent reviewer for *The Beltane Papers*, a lifelong student of things metaphysical and has been interested in things pagan since 1998. She's an avid reader, and even more, an avid thinker, who enjoys musing over big questions including — and perhaps especially — those which she will never answer.



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**Sacred Places of Goddess: 108 Destinations** by Karen Tate is available NOW from [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com). Discover a book 20,000 years in the making! Travel with author and Goddess advocate, Karen Tate, as she examines the varied Divine Feminine traditions as old as the Neolithic temples of Malta or as new at the Goddess Temple of Orange County, in locations as inaccessible as Sedna's Watery Domain near the Arctic Circle or as crowded as Ueno Park in downtown Tokyo.

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**TBP Readers** may know that Shekhinah has been dancing with cancer since December of '05. Help is much needed for medical costs, and also for her move to a larger, sunnier living space. If anyone would like to donate, you can send funds to Syren's paypal account. Her paypal address is [syrenofminds@gmail.com](mailto:syrenofminds@gmail.com). Or, if you wish to snail a check, contact Syren directly (not through paypal) at the same email address for information. Either way, please be sure to include a note with your donation, including your name, screen name, date, and what the \$ is for. Thank you, and the Goddess thanks you too!

**Morning Glory Zell Ravenheart :** Morning Glory is battling Myeloma. This is a very aggressive cancer of the bone marrow and blood which turns the bones and marrow into plasma. A support group has been set up on Yahoo at <http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/MorningGloryHealingUpdate> This group will be a place for everyone to learn what is going on with Morning Glory's healing process without emails having to be sent laboriously to each person who wishes to know...and so that we can share with each other the heartfelt responses that so many are sending. Please join if you wish to be kept abreast of unfolding news of the state of her health.

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~ Rita Mae Brown

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L K W O D A E S R L R A O C O  
O T R T E R E L E A E M O O R  
P E O E N O W A M C N T D H T  
+ A O A R + S C Y + + I E C +  
+ + T R O W R E H T O M U A +  
F F U R D O O W T E E W S M +

(Over, Down, Direction)

BASIL (3, 2, SE)  
BLOODROOT (9, 1, S)  
CALAMUSROOT (10, 12, N)  
CHOCOLATEMINT (14, 13, N)  
CORN SILKTEA (2, 3, S)

GOLDENROD (5, 7, S)  
LADYSMANILETEA (1, 1, SE)  
LEMON (7, 6, N)  
LOVAGE (7, 1, W)  
MARSHMALLOW (12, 11, N)  
MINT (6, 6, N)  
MOTHERWORT (12, 14, W)  
ORANGEMINT (6, 12, N)  
OSWEGOTEA (4, 5, S)  
POLKBERRIES (1, 12, N)  
QUEENANNESLACE (8, 1, S)  
ROSEGERANIUM (3, 4, SE)  
SOUTHERNWOOD (13, 1, S)  
STJOHNSWORT (15, 2, S)  
SWEETGALE (7, 13, N)  
SWEETWOODRUFF (13, 15, W)  
THYME (9, 15, N)  
USNEA (4, 2, SE)  
WILDGINGER (11, 1, S)  
YELLOWROOT (3, 5, S)

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(#12) #13 () #14 () #15 () #16 () #17 () #18 () #19 () #20 () #21 () #22 () #23 () #24

( ) #25: Helen Nelson Reed's lovely Japanese Goddess cover; Finnish folklore and recipies; Chinese/Japanese Goddesses and recipes; women's moon cycles and body image; Shekhinah Mountainwater's *Dark Maiden*; creating altars and sacred space.  
**SOLD OUT**

( ) #26: Kathy Morton-Stanion's Macha cover; more on Celtic Goddess Macha by Catherine Clare; Dark Maiden; Stregheria; Patricia Telesco's Goddess and Ghosts garden; words and music to Jennifer Berezan's *She Carries Me*.

( ) #27: Striking Blue-Eyed Madonna cover by Brandi Fairbanks; a skeptic visits the Black Madonna; reclaiming Mary; Lilith; Ereshkigal; dealing with grief and loss; *Holy Maidenhead: or How Our Medieval Foremothers Were Sold Virginity* by K. A. Laity.

( ) #28: *Spirit of Fire* cover by Katlyn Breene; fairy tales; witches' some new looks at Demeter and Persephone; Hot Flashes as Dream Symbols' hats' pomegranate rituals and BBQ recipes.  
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( ) #29: Mara Friedman's *Flying Into Spring* cover' birth and elemental empowerment; Australian aboriginal magic; African goddesses; Easter witches; Cyber Rituals and four new columns.

( ) #30: A beautiful *Hestia* cover by Katlyn Breene. Altars, Altars, Altars; *The Brazilian Great Mother* by Mirella Faur; and an interview with Z Budapest and Diana Paxson.

( ) #31: Suzanne Cheryl Gardner's light-hearted *Dance Like No One is Watching* cover; storytelling as healing; stories; a focus on dance; a powerful Hekate meditation by Morning Glory Zell; and much more

( ) #32: Our 20th anniversary issue! Helen Nelson-Reed's most lovely *The Goddess as Woman, Gazing into Her Past* graces our cover. Join us in remembering our past. In this issue you will find tattoos, Max Dashu, Charlene Spretnak, Deciphering Margaret Murray.

( ) Issue #33: Spectacular spiritual art cover by Julia Stewart introduces a Mother/Fire issue: the mystical history of Mother, some Irish Goddess history, feminist scrying lessons, Hagia Sophia, modern protection rituals.

( ) #34: "Wise Woman" by Lisa Hunt graces the cover; articles on Peri-Menopause, The Crone, interview with Riane Eisler, Irish, Owl and Candy Cane Goddesses, great new stories and poems.

( ) #35: Purple "Dolphin Dreams" cover by Suzanne Cheryl Gardner with our first mermaid! Inner transformation theme; Growing Up in a Druid Clan, Celtic wordsearch puzzle, interviews with TBP Advisory Council member Ruth Barrett and our astrologer Cal Garrison.

( ) #36: Gorgeous *Gaia's Blessing* cover by Marcia Snedecor introduces our Mother's Time/Making a Difference issue: Rebecca Solnit's Housewife Theory of History; Shekhinah Mountainwater's concept of the Womanpath and a re-viewing of Mists of Avalon movie; a menarche celebration; stories, poems and more.

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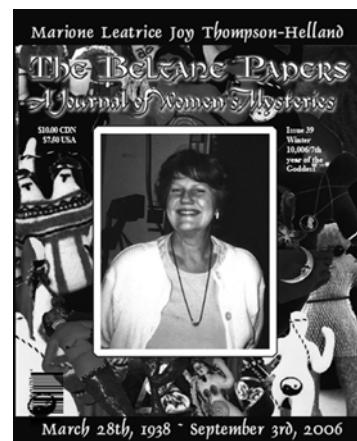
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( ) #37: Deborah Koff-Chapin's *Sister Monk Harem Series* painted with her Touch Drawing technique graces our cover. Interviews with Margot Adler, PC Cast, Karen Tate and Macha Nightmare. Articles on Feminism, Paganism, book reviews and more.



( ) #38 The strikingly beautiful "The Unexpected Git" by Helena Nelson-Reed graces this cover with interviews with Margaret Starbird and articles on Divine Feminism.

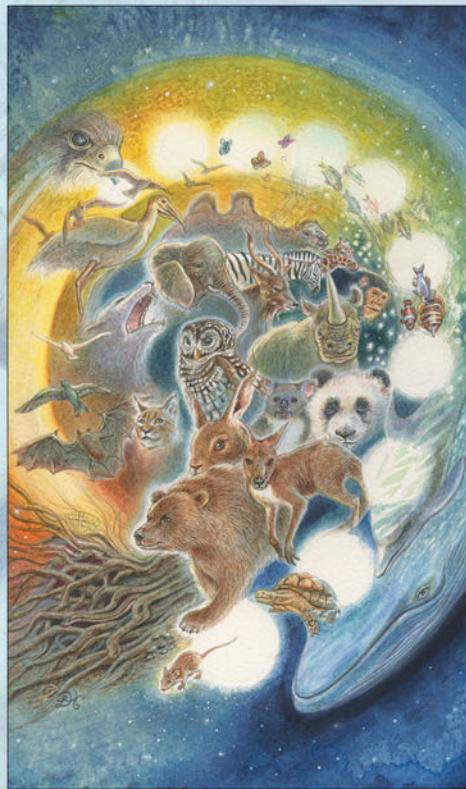


( ) #39 The Marione memorial issue. The Priestess Path by Marione LH Thompson, Cancer Musings by Shekinah Mountainwater, two articles about menstruation and menstrual suppression, Goddess wordsearch and much more.

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